

T H E
P R O V O K ' D W I F E .
A
C O M E D Y .

As it is A C T E D at the
T H E A T R E S - R O Y A L
I N
D R U R Y - L A N E
A N D
C O V E N T - G A R D E N .

Written by Sir J O H N V A N B R U G H .



L O N D O N :

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M D C C L X X V .

1607/5096

Dramatis Personæ.

Drury-Lane. Covent-Garden.

Constant, — — — *Mr. Cautherley*.

Heartfree, — — — *Mr. Aickin.* *Mr. Smith.*

Sir John Brute, — — — *Mr. Garrick.* *Mr. Woodward.*

Ld. Rake, } *Companions* } *Mr. Ackman.* *Mr. R. Smith.*
to *Sir John*
Col. Bully, } *Brute*, } *Mr. Vernon.*

Razor, *Valet de Chambre* }
to *Sir John Brute*, } *Mr. Parsons.* *Mr. Dyer.*

Justice of the Peace, *Mr. Bransby.*

Constable and Watch.

Lady Brute, — — — *Mrs. Barry,* *Mrs. Ward.*

Belinda, — — — *Mrs. Jefferies.* *Mrs. Mattocks.*

Lady Fancyful, — — — *Mrs. Abington.* *Mrs. Bellamy.*

Mademoiselle, — — — *Miss Radley.* *Mrs. Green.*

Cornet, *Servant to Lady* }
Fancyful, — — — }



were the merit of all mankind bestow'd upon one single person, I shou'd still think the fellow wanted something to make it worth my while to take notice of him: and yet I cou'd love; nay, fondly love, were it possible to have a thing made on purpose for me: for I'm not cruel, Mademoiselle; I'm only nice.

Madem. Ah, matam, I wish I was fine gentleman for your sake. I do all de ting in de world, to get a little way into your heart. I make song, I make verse, I give you de serenade, I give great many present to Mademoiselle; I no eat, I no sleep, I be lean, I be mad, I hang myself, I drown myself. Ah, ma chere dame, que je vous aimerois.

[embracing her.]

L. F. Well, the French have strange obliging ways with 'em; you may take those two pair of gloves, Mademoiselle.

Madem. Me humbly tank my sweet lady.

Enter servant with a letter.

Ser. Madam, here's a letter for your ladyship.

L. F. 'Tis thus I am importun'd every morning, Mademoiselle. Pray, how do the French ladies when they are thus *accablées*?

Madem. Matam, dey never complain. *Au contraire*, when one Frense laty have got a hundred lover——Den she do all she can——to get a hundred more.

L. F. Well, let me die, I think they have le goût bon. For 'tis an unutterable pleasure to be ador'd by all the men, and envy'd by all the women——Yet I'll swear I'm concern'd at the torture I give 'em. Lard, why was I form'd to make the whole creation uneasy? But let me read my letter.

[Reads.]

"If you have a mind to hear of your faults, instead of being prais'd for your virtues, take the pains to walk in the Green-walk, in St. James's park, with your woman, an' hour hence. You'll there meet one, who hates you for some things, as he could love you for others, and therefore is willing to endeavour your reformation——If you come to the place I mention, you'll know who I am: if you don't, you never shall: so take your choice."

This is strangely familiar, Mademoiselle; now have I a provoking fancy to know who this impudent fellow is.

Madem. Den take your scarf and your mask, and go to de rendezvous. De Frense laty do justement comme ça.

L. F. Rendezvous! What, rendezvous with a man, Mademoiselle?

Madem. Eh, pourquoi non?

L. F. What, and a man perhaps I never saw in my life!

Madem. Tant mieux: c'est donc quelque chose de nouveau.

L. F.

L. F. Why, how do I know what designs he may have ? He may intend to ravish me, for aught I know.

Madem. Ravish ?—Bagatelle. I would fain see one impudent rogue ravish Mademoiselle ; oui, je le voudrois.

L. F. O but my reputation, Mademoiselle, my reputation ; ah, ma chere reputation.

Madem. Matam—Quand on l'a une fois perdue—On n'en est plus embarrassée.

L. F. Fe, Mademoiselle, fe ; reputation is a jewel.

Madem. Qui coute bien chere, matam.

L. F. Why sure you would not sacrifice your honour to your pleasure ?

Madem. Je suis philosophe.

L. F. Bless me, how you talk ! Why, what if honour be a burden, Mademoiselle, must it not be borne ?

Madem. Chaqu'un a sa façon—Quand quelque chose m'incommode moi—je m'en defais, vite.

L. F. Get you gone, you little naughty Frenchwoman you, I vow and swear I must turn you out of doors, if you talk thus.

Madem. Turn me out of doors !—Turn yourself out of doors, and go see what de gentleman have to say to you—Tenez. Voilà [*giving her her things hastily*] votre esharpe, voilà votre coife, voilà votre masque, voilà tout. Hey, Mercure, coquin : call one chair for matam, and one oder [*calling within*] for me : va t'en, vite.

[*Turning to her lady, and helping her on hastily with her things.*]

Allons, Matam ; depechez-vous donc. Mon Dieu, quelles scrupules.

L. F. Well, for once, Mademoiselle, I'll follow your advice, out of the intemperate desire I have to know who this ill-bred fellow is. But I have too much delicatessé to make a practice o'nt.

Madem. Belle chose vraiment que la delicatessé, lors qu'il s'agit de se divertir—à ça—Vous voilà équipée, partons.—Hé bein ?—qu'avez-vous donc ?

L. F. J'ai puer.

Madem. Je n'en ai point moi.

L. F. I dare not go.

Madem. Demeurez donc.

L. F. Je suis poltrone.

Madem. Tant pis pour vous.

L. F. Curiosity's a wicked devil.

Madem. C'est une charmante sainte.

L. F. It ruin'd our first parents.

Madem. Elle a bien diverti leurs enfans.

L. F. L'honneur est contre.

Madem.

Madem. Le plaisir est pour.

L. F. Must I then go?

Madem. Must you go? ——— Must you eat, must you drink, must you sleep, must you live? De nature bid you do one, de nature bid you do toder. Vous me ferez enrager.

L. F. But when reason corrects nature, Mademoiselle?

Madem. Elle est bien insolente, c'est sa sœur ainée.

L. F. Do you then prefer your nature to your reason, Mademoiselle?

Madem. Oui da.

L. F. Pourquoi?

Madem. Because my nature make me merry, my reason make me mad.

L. F. Ah, la méchante Française.

Madem. Ah, la belle Anglaise. [*Forcing her lady off.*]

A C T II.

S C E N E, *St. James's Park.*

Enter Lady Fancyful and Mademoiselle.

L. F. **W**ELL, I vow, Mademoiselle, I'm strangely impatient to know who this confident fellow is.

Enter Heartfree.

Look, there's Heartfree. But sure it can't be him: he's a profess'd woman-hater. Yet who knows what my wicked eyes may have done?

Madem. Il nous approche, matam.

L. F. Yes, 'tis he: Now will he be most intolerably cavalier, tho' he should be in love with me.

Heartf. Madam, I'm your humble servant; I perceive you have more humility and good-nature than I thought you had.

L. F. What you attribute to humility and good-nature, Sir, may perhaps be only due to curiosity. I had a mind to know who 'twas had ill manners enough to write that letter.

[*Throwing him his letter.*]

Heartf. Well, and now I hope you are satisfy'd?

L. F. I am so, Sir; good-by t'ye.

Heartf. Nay, hold there; tho' you have done your business, I han't done mine: By your ladyship's leave, we must have one moment's prattle together. Have you a mind to be the prettiest woman about town, or not? How she stares upon me! What! this passes for an impertinent question with you now, because you think you are so already.

L. F. Pray, Sir, let me ask you a question in my turn: By what right do you pretend to examine me?

B

Heartf.

Heartf. By the same right that the strong govern the weak, because I have you in my power; for you cannot get so quickly to your coach, but I shall have time enough to make you hear every thing I have to say to you.

L. F. These are strange liberties you take, Mr. Heart-free.

Heartf. They are so, madam, but there's no help for it; for know that I have a design upon you.

L. F. Upon me, Sir!

Heartf. Yes; and one that will turn to your glory, and my comfort, if you will be but a little wiser than you use to be.

L. F. Very well, Sir.

Heartf. Let me see—Your vanity, madam, I take to be about some eight degrees higher than any woman's in the town, let t'other be who she will; and my indifference is naturally about the same pitch. Now, could you find the way to turn this indifference into fire and flames, methinks your vanity ought to be satisfy'd; and this, perhaps, you might bring about upon pretty reasonable terms.

L. F. And pray at what rate would this indifference be bought off, if one should have so depraved an Appetite to desire it.

Heartf. Why, madam, to drive a quaker's bargain, and make but one word with you, if I do part with it—you must lay me down—your affectation.

L. F. My affectation, Sir!

Heartf. Why I ask you nothing but what you may very well spare.

L. F. You grow rude, Sir. Come, Mademoiselle, 'tis high time to be gone.

Madem. Allons, allons, allons.

Heartf. [Stopping them.] Nay, you may as well stand still; for hear me you shall, walk which way you please.

L. F. What mean you, Sir?

Heartf. I mean to tell you, that you are the most ungrateful woman upon earth.

L. F. Ungrateful! To who?

Heartf. To nature.

L. F. Why, what has nature done for me?

Heartf. What you have undone by art! It made you handsome; it gave you beauty to a miracle, a shape without a fault, wit enough to make them relish, and so turn'd you loose to your own discretion; which has made such work with you, that you are become the pity of our sex, and the jest of your own. There is not a feature in your face, but you have found the way to teach it some affected convulsion; your feet, your hands, your very fingers ends are directed never to move
without

without some ridiculous air or other; and your language is a suitable trumpet, to draw people's eyes upon the rare-show.

Madem. [*Aside.*] Est ce qu'on fait l'amour en Angleterre comme ça?

L. F. [*Aside.*] Now cou'd I cry for madness, but that I know he'd laugh at me for it.

Heartf. Now do you hate me for telling you the truth, but that's because you don't believe 'tis so; for were you once convinc'd of that, you'd reform for your own sake.

L. F. Every circumstance of nice breeding must needs appear ridiculous to one who has so natural an antipathy to good manners.

Heartf. But suppose I could find the means to convince you, that the whole world is of my opinion.

L. F. Sir, tho' you, and all the world you talk of, shou'd be so impertinently officious, as to think to persuade me I don't know how to behave myself; I shou'd still have charity enough for my own understanding, to believe myself in the right, and all you in the wrong.

Madem. Le voilà mort.

[*Exeunt Lady Fancyful, and Mademoiselle.*]

Heartf. [*Gazing after her.*] There her single clapper has publish'd the sense of the whole sex. Well, this once I have endeavour'd to wash the black-moor white, but henceforward I'll sooner undertake to teach sincerity to a courtier, generosity to an usurer, honesty to a lawyer, than discretion to a woman I see has once set her heart upon playing the fool.

Enter Constant.

Morrow, Constant.

Const. Good-morrow, Jack: What are you doing here this morning?

Heartf. Doing! guess, if you can.—Why I have been endeavouring to persuade my lady Fancyful, that she's the most foolish woman about town.

Const. A pretty endeavour truly.

Heartf. I have told her in as plain English as I could speak, both what the town says of her, and what I think of her. In short, I have us'd her as an absolute King would do Magna Charta.

Const. And how does she take it?

Heartf. As children do pills; bite them, but can't swallow them.

Const. But, pr'ythee, what has put it into your head, of all mankind, to turn reformer?

Heartf. Why, one thing was, the morning hung upon my hands, I did not know what to do with myself: and another was, that as little as I care for women, I cou'd not see with

patience one that heaven had taken such wond'rous pains about, be so very industrious to make herself the jack-pudding of the creation.

Const. Well, now could I almost wish to see my cruel mistress make the self-same use of what heaven has done for her, that so I might be cur'd of the same disease that makes me so very uneasy; for love, love is the devil, Heartfree.

Heartf. And why do you let the devil govern you?

Const. Because I have more flesh and blood than grace and self-denial. My dear, dear mistress, 'sdeath! that so genteel a woman should be a saint, when religion is out of fashion.

Heartf. Nay, she's much in the wrong truly; but who knows how far time and good example may prevail?

Const. O! they have play'd their parts in vain already: 'tis now two years since the damn'd fellow her husband invited me to his wedding; and there was the first time I saw that charming woman, whom I have lov'd ever since; but she is cold, my friend, still cold as the northern star.

Heartf. So are all women by nature, which makes them so willing to be warm'd.

Const. O don't profane the sex; pr'ythee think them all angels for her sake; for she's virtuous even to a fault.

Heartf. A lover's head is a good accountable thing truly; he adores his mistress for being virtuous, and yet is very angry with her because she won't be lewd.

Const. Well, the only relief I expect in my misery is to see

that some day or other as deeply engag'd as myself, which will force me to be merry in the midst of all my misfortunes.

Heartf. That day will never come, be assur'd, Ned. Not but that I can pass a night with a woman, and for the time, perhaps make myself as good sport as you can do. Nay, I can court a woman too, call her nymph, angel, goddess, what you please: But here's the difference between you and I; I persuade a woman she's an angel, and she persuades you she's one. Pr'ythee let me tell you how I avoid falling in love; that which serves me for prevention, may chance to serve you for a cure.

Const. Well, use the ladies moderately then, and I'll hear you.

Heartf. That using them moderately undoes us all; but I'll use them justly, and that you ought to be satisfied with. I always consider a woman, not as the taylor, the shoemaker, the tire-woman, the sempstress, and (which is more than all that) the poet makes her; but I consider her as pure nature has contriv'd her, and that more strictly than I should have done our old grandmother Eve, had I seen her naked in the garden; for I consider her turn'd inside out. Her heart well examin'd,

examin'd, I find there pride, vanity, covetousness, indiscretion ; but above all things, malice : plots eternally forging to destroy one another's reputations, and as honestly to charge the levity of mens tongues with the scandal ; hourly debates how to make poor gentlemen in love with them, with no other intent but to use them like dogs when they have done ; a constant desire of doing more mischief, and an everlasting war wag'd against truth and good-nature.

Const. Very well, Sir ; an admirable composition truly !

Heartf. Then for her outside, I consider it merely as an outside ; she has a thin tiffany covering over just such stuff as you and I are made on. As for her motion, her mien, her airs, and all those tricks, I know they affect you mightily. If you should see your mistress at a coronation dragging her peacock's train, with all her state and insolence about her, 'twould strike you with all the awful thoughts that heav'n itself could pretend to from you : whereas I turn the whole matter into a jest, and suppose her strutting in the self same stately manner, with nothing on but her stays, and her under scanty quilted petticoat.

Const. Hold thy profane tongue ; for I'll hear no more.

Heartf. What, you'll love on then ?

Const. Yes, to eternity.

Heartf. Yet you have no hopes at all.

Const. None.

Heartf. Nay, the resolution may be discreet enough ; perhaps you have found out some new philosophy, that love, like virtue, is its own reward : so you and your mistress will be as well content at a distance, as others that have less learning are in coming together.

Const. No ; but if she should prove kind at last, my dear Heartfree. *[Embracing him.]*

Heartf. Nay, pr'ythee don't take me for your mistress ; for lovers are very troublesome.

Const. Well, who knows what time may do ?

Heartf. And just now he was sure time could do nothing.

Const. Yet not one kind glance in two years, is somewhat strange.

Heartf. Not strange at all ; she don't like you, that's all the business.

Const. Pr'ythee don't distract me.

Heartf. Nay, you are a good handsome young fellow, she might use you better : come, will you go see her ; perhaps, she may have chang'd her mind ; there's some hopes as long as she's a woman.

Const. O, 'tis in vain to visit her : sometimes to get a sight of her, I visit that beast her husband, but she certainly finds some pretence to quit the room as soon as I enter.

Heartf. It's much she don't tell him you have made love to her too; for that's another good-natur'd thing usual amongst women, in which they have several ends. Sometimes 'tis to recommend their virtue, that they may be lewd with the greater security. Sometimes 'tis to make their husbands fight, in hopes they may be kill'd, when their affairs require it should be so: but most commonly 'tis to engage two men in a quarrel, that they may have the credit of being fought for; and if the lover's kill'd in the business, they cry, poor fellow, he had ill luck—and so they go to cards.

Const. Thy injuries to women are not to be forgiven. Look to't, if ever you fall into their hands—

Heartf. They can't use me worse than they do you, that speak well of 'em. O ho! here comes the knight.

Enter Sir John Brute.

Heartf. Your humble servant Sir John.

Sir J. Servant, Sir.

Heartf. How does all your family?

Sir J. Pox o' my family?

Const. How does your lady? I han't seen her abroad a good while.

Sir J. Do? I don't know how she does, not I; she was well enough yesterday; I han't been at home to-night.

Const. What, were you out of town?

Sir J. Out of town! No, I was drinking.

Const. You are a true Englishman; don't know your own happiness. If I were married to such a woman, I wou'd not be from her a night for all the wine in France.

Sir J. Not from her!—'Oons—what a time should a man have of that!

Heartf. Why, there's no division, I hope.

Sir J. No; but there's a conjunction, and that's worse; a pox of the parson—Why the plague don't you two marry? I fancy I look like the devil to you.

Heartf. Why, you don't think you have horns, do you?

Sir J. No, I believe my wife's religion will keep her honest.

Heartf. And what will make her keep her religion?

Sir J. Persecution; and therefore she shall have it.

Heartf. Have a care, knight, women are tender things.

Sir J. And yet, methinks, 'tis a hard matter to break their hearts.

Const. Fy, fy; you have one of the best wives in the world, and yet you seem the most uneasy husband.

Sir J. Best wives!—the woman's well enough; she has no vice that I know of, but she's a wife, and—damn a wife; if I were married to a hoghead of claret, matrimony would make me hate it.

Heartf.

Heartf. Why did you marry then? You were old enough, to know your own mind.

Sir J. Why did I marry? I married because I had a mind to lay with her, and she would not let me.

Heartf. Why did you not ravish her?

Sir J. Yes, and so have hedg'd myself into forty quarrels with her relations, besides buying my pardon: but more than all that, you must know I was afraid of my soul in those days: for I kept sneaking cowardly company, fellows that went to church, said grace to their meat, and had not the least tincture of quality about them.

Heartf. But I think you are got into a better gang now.

Sir J. Zoons, Sir, my Lord Rake and I are hand and glove: I believe we may get our bones broke together to-night; have you a mind to share a frolick?

Const. Not I, truly; my talent lies to softer exercises.

Sir J. What, a down-bed and a strumpet? A pox of venery, I say. Will you come and drink with me this afternoon?

Const. I can't drink to-day, but we'll come and sit an hour with you if you will.

Sir J. Phugh, pox, sit an hour! Why can't you drink?

Const. Because I'm to see my mistress.

Sir J. Who's that?

Const. Why, do you use to tell?

Sir J. Yes.

Const. So won't I.

Sir J. Why?

Const. Because, 'tis a secret.

Sir J. Would my wife knew it, 'twould be no secret long.

Const. Why, do you think she can't keep a secret?

Sir J. No more than she can keep Lent.

Heartf. Pr'ythee, tell it her to try, Constant.

Sir J. No, pr'ythee don't, that I mayn't be plagu'd with it.

Const. I'll hold you a guinea you don't make her tell it you.

Sir J. I'll hold you a guinea I do.

Const. Which way?

Sir J. Why, I'll beg her not to tell it me.

Heartf. Nay, if any thing does it, that will.

Const. But do you think, Sir—

Sir J. 'Oons, Sir, I think a woman and a secret are the two impertinentest themes in the universe: therefore pray let's hear no more of my wife, nor your mistress. Damn 'em both with all my heart; and every thing else that daggles a petticoat, except four generous whores who are drunk with my Lord Rake and I ten times in a fortnight. [Exit Sir John.]

Const. Here's a dainty fellow for you! And the veriest coward too. But his usage of his wife makes me ready to stab the villain.

Heartf. Lovers are short-sighted : all their senses run into that of feeling. This proceeding of his is the only thing on earth can make your fortune. If any thing can prevail with her to accept of a gallant, 'tis his ill usage of her. Pr'ythee, take heart, I have great hopes for you : and since I can't bring you quite off her, I'll endeavour to bring you quite on ; for a whining lover is the damnest companion upon earth.

Const. My dear friend, flatter me a little more with these hopes ; for whilst they prevail, I have heaven within me, and could melt with joy.

Heartf. Pray no melting yet ; let things go farther first. This afternoon perhaps we shall make some advance. In the mean while, let's go dine at Locket's, and let hope get you a stomach. [*Exeunt.*]

S C E N E, *Lady Fanciful's House.*

Enter Lady Fanciful, and Mademoiselle.

L. F. Did you ever see any thing so importune, Mademoiselle ?

Madem. Inteed, Matam, to say de trute, he want leetel good-breeding.

L. F. Good-breeding ! He wants to be caned, Mademoiselle : an insolent fellow ! And yet let me expose my weakness, 'tis the only man on earth I could resolve to dispense my favours on, were he but a fine gentleman. Well ! did men but know how deep an impression a fine gentleman makes in a lady's heart, they would reduce all their studies to that of good-breeding alone.

Enter Servant.

Serv. Will your ladyship please to dine yet ?

L. F. Yes, let 'em serve. [*Exit Servant.*] Sure this Heart-free has bewitch'd me, Mademoiselle. You can't imagine how oddly he mixt himself in my thoughts during my rapture e'en now. I vow 'tis a thousand pities he is not more polish'd ; Don't you think so ?

Madem. Matam, I tink it so great pity, dat if I was in your ladyship's place, I take him home in my house, I lock him up in my closet, and I never let him go till I teach him every ting dat fine lary expect from fine gentelman.

L. F. Why truly I believe I should soon subdue his brutality ; for, without doubt, he has a strange *penchant* to grow fond of me, in spite of his aversion to the sex, else he would ne'er have taken so much pains about me. Lord, how proud wou'd some poor creatures be of such a conquest ! But I, alas ! I don't know how to receive as a favour, what I take to be so infinitely my due. But what shall I do to new mould him, Mademoiselle, for till then he's my utter aversion ?

Madem. Matam, you must laugh at him in all de place dat you meet him, and turn into de reticule all he say, and all he do.

L. F. Why truly, satire has ever been of wond'rous use to reform ill-manners. Besides, 'tis my particular talent to ridicule folks. I can be severe, strangely severe, when I will, Mademoiselle.—Give me the pen and ink—I find myself whimsical—I'll write to him—Or I'll let it alone, and be severe upon him that way. [*Sitting down to write, rising up again.*]—Yet active severity is better than passive. [*Sitting down.*]—'Tis as good to let it alone too; for every lash I give him, perhaps he'll take for a favour.—Yet 'tis a thousand pities so much satire should be lost. [*Sitting.*]—But if it should have a wrong effect upon him, 'twould distract me. [*Rising.*]—Well, I must write tho' after all. [*Sitting.*]—Or I'll let it alone, which is the same thing. [*Rising.*]
Madem. La voilà déterminée. [*Exeunt.*]

A C T III.

SCENE opens. Sir John, Lady Brute, and Belinda, rising from the Table.

Sir J. **H**ERE; take away the things; I expect company. But first bring me a pipe; I'll smoke.
 [*To a servant.*]

L. B. Lord, Sir John, I wonder you won't leave that nasty custom.

Sir J. Pr'ythee don't be impertinent.

Bel. [*to Lady Brute.*] I wonder who those are he expects this afternoon?

L. B. I'd give the world to know: perhaps 'tis Constant, he comes here sometimes; if it does prove him, I'm resolv'd I'll share the visit.

Bel. We'll send for our work and sit here.

L. B. He'll choak us with his tobacco.

Bel. Nothing will choak us when we are doing what we have a mind to. Lovewell.

Enter Lovewell.

Lov. Madam.

L. B. Here; bring my cousin's work and mine hither.
 [*Exit Lov. and re-enters with their work.*]

Sir J. Why, pox, can't you work somewhere else?

L. B. We shall be careful not to disturb you, Sir.

Bel. Your pipe would make you too thoughtful, uncle, if you were left alone; our prittle-prattle will cure your spleen.

Sir J. Will it so, Mrs. Pert! Now I believe it will so increase it. [*Sitting and smoking.*] I shall take my own house for a paper-mill.

L. B. [*to Bel. aside.*] Don't let's mind him; let him say what he will.

Sir

Sir J. A woman's tongue a cure for the spleen—'Oons—
[*aside.*] If a man had got the head-ach, they'd be for applying the same remedy.

L. B. You have done a great deal, Belinda, since yesterday.

Bel. Yes, I have work'd very hard; how do you like it?

L. B. O! 'tis the prettiest fringe in the world. Well, cousin, you have the happiest fancy: pr'ythee advise me about altering my crimson petticoat.

Sir J. A pox o' your petticoat; here's such a prating, a man can't digest his own thoughts for you.

L. B. Don't answer him. [*Aside.*] Well, what do you advise me?

Bel. Why, really, I wou'd not alter it at all. Methinks, 'tis very pretty as it is.

L. B. Ay, that's true: but you know one grows weary of the prettiest things in the world when one has had 'em long.

Sir J. Yes, I have taught her that.

Bel. Shall we provoke him a little?

L. B. With all my heart. Belinda, don't you long to be marry'd?

Bel. Why, there are some things in it which I could like well enough.

L. B. What do you think you shou'd dislike?

Bel. My husband, a hundred to one else.

L. B. O ye wicked wretch! Sure you don't speak as you think?

Bel. Yes, I do: especially if he smok'd tobacco.

[*He looks earnestly at them.*]

L. B. Why, that many times takes off worse smells.

Bel. Then he must smell very ill indeed.

L. B. Some men will, to keep their wives from coming near 'em.

Bel. Then those wives shou'd cuckold 'em at a distance.

[*He rises in a fury, throws his pipe at 'em, and drives 'em out. As they run off, Constant and Heartfree enter.*]

[*Lady Brute runs against Constant.*]

Sir J. 'Oons, get you gone up stairs, you confederating strumpets you, or I'll cuckold you with a vengeance.

L. B. O Lord, he'll beat us, he'll beat us. Dear, dear Mr. Constant, save us. [*Exeunt.*]

Sir J. I'll cuckold you with a pox.

Const. Heav'n! Sir John, what's the matter?

Sir J. Why these two gentlewomen did but hear me say I expected you here this afternoon; upon which, they presently resolv'd to take up the room, o' purpose to plague me and my friends.

Const. Was that all? Why we should have been glad of their company.

Sir

Sir *J.* Then I should have been weary of yours; for I can't relish both together. They found fault with my smoking tobacco too; and said men stunk. But I have a good mind—to say something.

Const. No, nothing against the ladies, pray.

Sir *J.* Split the ladies. Come, will you sit down? Give us some wine, fellow. You won't smoke?

Const. No, nor drink neither at this time, I must ask your pardon.

Sir *J.* What, this mistress of yours runs in your head! I'll warrant it's some such squeamish minx as my wife, that's grown so dainty of late, she finds fault even with a dirty shirt.

Heartf. That a woman may do, and not be very dainty neither.

Sir *J.* Pox of the women, let's drink. Come, you shall take one glass, tho' I send for a box of lozenges to sweeten your mouth after it.

Const. Nay, if one glass will satisfy you, I'll drink it, without putting you to that expence.

Sir *J.* Why that's honest. Fill some wine, firrah: So here's to you, gentlemen—A wife's the devil. To your being both married. [*They drink.*]

Heartf. O, your most humble servant, Sir.

Sir *J.* Well, how do you like my wine?

Const. 'Tis very good indeed.

Heartf. 'Tis admirable.

Sir *J.* Then give us t'other glass.

Const. No, pray excuse us now: we'll come another time, and then we won't spare it.

Sir *J.* This one glass, and no more. Come, it shall be your mistress's health: and that's a great compliment from me, I assure you.

Const. And 'tis a very obliging one to me: So give us the glasses.

Sir *J.* So; let her live. [*Sir John coughs in the glass.*]

Heartf. And be kind.

Const. What's the matter? Does it go the wrong way?

Sir *J.* If I had love enough to be jealous, I should take this for an ill omen: For I never drank my wife's health in my life, but I puk'd in the glass.

Const. O she's too virtuous to make any reasonable man jealous.

Sir *J.* Pox of her virtue. If I could but catch her adulterating, I might be divorc'd from her by law.

Heartf. And so pay her a yearly pension, to be a distinguish'd cuckold.

Enter Servant.

Serv. Sir, there's my Lord Rake, Colonel Bully, and some other gentlemen at the Blue Posts, desire your company.

Sir J. Cod's so, we are to consult about playing the devil to-night.

Heartf. Well, we won't hinder business.

Sir J. Methinks, I don't know how to leave you two : but for once I must make bold. Or look you ; may be the conference mayn't last long ! So if you'll wait here half an hour, or an hour ; if I don't come then—why then—I won't come at all.

Heartf. [*To Const.*] A good modest proposition, truly.

[*Aside.*

Const. But let's accept on't however. Who knows what may happen ?

Heartf. Well, Sir, to shew you how fond we are of your company, we'll expect your return as long as we can.

Sir J. Nay, may be I mayn't stay at all ; but business you know must be done. So your servant—Or, hark you, if you have a mind to take a frisk with us, I have an interest with my Lord ; I can easily introduce you.

Const. We are much beholden to you ; but for my part, I'm engag'd another way.

Sir J. What ! to your mistress, I'll warrant. Pr'ythee, leave your nasty punk to entertain herself with her own lewd thoughts, and make one with us to-night.

Const. Sir, 'tis business that is to employ me.

Heartf. And me ; and business must be done, you know.

Sir J. Ay, womens business, tho' the world were consum'd for't.

[*Exit Sir John.*

Const. Farewel, beast ; and now, my dear friend, would my mistress be but as complaisant as some mens wives, who think it a piece of good breeding to receive the visits of their husband's friends in his absence !

Heartf. Why for your sake, I could forgive her, tho' she should be so complaisant to receive something else in his absence. But what way shall we invent to see her ?

Const. O ne'er hope it : invention will prove as vain as wishes.

Enter Lady Brute and Belinda.

Heartf. What do you think now, friend ?

Const. I think I shall swoon.

Heartf. I'll speak first then, whilst you fetch breath.

L. B. We think ourselves oblig'd, gentlemen, to come and return you thanks for your knight-errantry. We were just upon being devour'd by the fiery dragon.

Bel. Did not his fumes almost knock you down, gentlemen.

Heartf. Truly, ladies, we did undergo some hardships ; and should have done more, if some greater heroes than ourselves had not diverted him.

Const.

Const. Tho' I'm glad of the service you are pleas'd to say we have done you; yet I'm sorry we could do it in no other way, than by making ourselves privy to what you would perhaps have kept a secret.

L. B. For Sir John's part, I suppose he design'd it no secret, since he made so much noise. And for myself, truly I'm not much concern'd, since 'tis fallen only into this gentleman's hands and yours; who, I have many reasons to believe, will neither interpret nor report any thing to my disadvantage.

Const. Your good opinion, madam, was what I fear'd I never could have merited.

L. B. Your fears were vain then, Sir; for I'm just to every body.

Heartf. Pr'ythee, Constant, what is't you do to get the ladies good opinions; for I'm a novice at it?

Bel. Sir, will you give me leave to instruct you?

Heartf. Yes, that I will with all my soul, madam.

Bel. Why, then you must never be slovenly; never be out of humour, never smoke tobacco, nor drink but when you are dry.

Heartf. That's hard.

Const. Nay, if you take his bottle from him, you break his heart, madam.

Bel. Why is it possible the gentleman can love drinking?

Heartf. Only by way of antidote.

Bel. Against what, pray?

Heartf. Against love, madam.

L. B. Are you afraid of being in love, Sir?

Heartf. I shou'd, if there was any danger of it.

L. B. Pray why so?

Heartf. Because I always had an aversion to being us'd like a dog.

Bel. Why, truly, men in love are seldom us'd better.

L. B. But was you never in love, Sir?

Heartf. No, I thank heav'n, madam.

Bel. Pray, where got you your learning then?

Heartf. From other people's expence.

Bel. That's being a spunger, Sir, which is scarce honest: if you'd buy some experience with your own money, as 'twould be fairlier got, so 'twould stick longer by you.

Enter Footman.

Foot. Madam, here's my lady Fancyful, to wait upon your ladyship.

L. B. Shield me, kind heaven! what an inundation of impertinence is here coming upon us!

Enter lady Fancyful, who runs first to lady Brute, then to Belinda, kissing 'em.

L. F. My dear lady Brute, and sweet Belinda, methinks, 'tis an age since I saw you.

L. B. Yet 'tis but three days; sure you have pass'd your time very ill, it seems so long to you.

L. F. Why really, to confess the truth to you, I am so everlastingly fatigu'd with the addresses of unfortunate gentlemen, that, were it not for the extravagancy of the example, I shou'd e'en tear out these wicked eyes with my own fingers, to make both myself and mankind easy. What think you on't, Mr. Heartfree, for I take you to be my faithful adviser?

Heartf. Why, truly, madam—I think—every project that is for the good of mankind, ought to be encourag'd.

L. F. Then I have your consent, Sir?

Heartf. To do whatever you please, madam.

L. F. You had a much more limited complaisance this morning, Sir. Would you believe it, ladies? the gentleman has been so exceeding generous, to tell me of above fifty faults, in less time than it was well possible for me to commit two of 'em.

Const. Why, truly, madam, my friend there is apt to be something familiar with the ladies.

L. F. He is indeed, Sir; but he's wond'rous charitable with it: he has had the goodness to design a reformation, ev'n down to my fingers ends.—'Twas thus, I think, Sir, [*Opening her fingers in an awkward manner*] you'd have 'em stand—my eyes too he did not like: how was't you wou'd have directed 'em? thus I think. [*Staring at him*]—then there was something amiss in my gait too: I don't know well how 'twas! but as I take it, he would have had me walk like him. Pray, Sir, do me the favour to take a turn or two about the room, that the company may see you—he's sullen, ladies, and won't. But, to make short, and give you as true an idea as I can of the matter, I think 'twas much about this figure in general, he would have moulded me to: But I was an obstinate woman, and could not resolve to make myself mistress of his heart, by growing as awkward as his fancy.

[*She walks awkwardly about, staring and looking ungainly, then changes on a sudden to the extremity of her usual affectation.*]

Heartf. Just thus women do, when they think we are in love with 'em, or when they are so with us.

[*Here Constant and Lady Brute talk together apart.*]

L. F. 'Twould however be less vanity for me to conclude the former, than you the latter, Sir.

Heartf.

Heartf. Madam, all I shall presume to conclude, is, That if I were in Love, you'd find the means to make me soon weary on't.

L. F. Not by over-fondness upon my word, Sir. But pray let's stop here; for you are so much govern'd by instinct, I know you'll grow brutish at last.

Bel. [*Aside*] Now am I sure she's fond of him: I'll try to make her jealous. Well, for my part, I should be glad to find some-body would be so free with me, that I might know my faults, and mend 'em.

L. F. Then pray let me recommend this gentleman to you: I have known him some time, and will be surety for him, that upon a very limited encouragement on your side, you shall find an extended impudence on his.

Heartf. I thank you, madam, for your recommendation: but hating idleness, I'm unwilling to enter into a place where I believe there would be nothing to do. I was fond of serving your ladyship, because I knew you'd find me constant employment.

L. F. I told you he'd be rude, Belinda.

Bel. O, a little bluntness is a sign of honesty, which makes me always ready to pardon it. So, Sir, if you have no other exceptions to my service, but the fear of being idle in it, you may venture to list yourself: I shall find you work, I warrant you.

Heartf. Upon those terms I engage, madam; and this (with your leave) I take for earnest. [*Offering to kiss her hand.*]

Bel. Hold there, Sir: I'm none of your earnest givers. But if I'm well serv'd, I give good wages, and pay punctually.

[*Heartf. and Bel. seem to continue talking familiarly.*]

L. F. [*Aside.*] I don't like this jesting between 'em——Methinks the fool begins to look as if he were in earnest——but then he must be a fool indeed.——Lard, what a difference there is between me and her. [*Looking at Bel. scornfully*] How I thou'd despise such a thing, if I were a man!——What a nose she has——What a chin——What a neck——Then her eyes——And the worst kissing lips in the universe——No, no, he can never like her, that's positive——Yet I can't suffer 'em together any longer. Mr. Heartfree, do you know, that you and I must have no quarrel for all this? I can't forbear being a little severe now and then: but women, you know, may be allowed any thing.

Heartf. Up to a certain age, madam.

L. F. Which I'm not yet past, I hope.

Heartf. [*Aside*] Nor ever will, I dare swear.

L. F. [*To Lady Brute.*] Come, madam, will your ladyship be witness to our reconciliation?

L. B. You agree then at last?

Heartf. [*Slightly*] We forgive.

L. F. [*Aside*] That was a cold, ill-natur'd reply.

L. B. Then there's no challenges sent between you?

Heartf. Not from me, I promise. [*Aside to Constant*] But that's more than I'll do for her; for I know she can as well be damn'd as forbear writing to me.

Const. That I believe. But I think we had best be going, lest she should suspect something, and be malicious.

Heartf. With all my heart.

Const. Ladies, we are your humble servants. I see Sir John is quite engag'd, 'twould be in vain to expect him. Come, Heartfree. [*Exit*

Heartf. Ladies, your servant. [*To Belinda*] I hope, madam, you won't forget our bargain; I'm to say what I please to you. [*Exit Heartfree*

Bel. Liberty of speech entire, Sir.

L. F. [*Aside*] Very pretty truly——But how the blockhead went out languishing at her; and not a look toward me——Well, people may talk, but miracles are not ceas'd. For 'tis more than natural, such a rude fellow as he, and such a little impertinent as she, should be capable of making a woman of my sphere uneasy. But I can bear her sight no longer——methinks, she's grown ten times uglier than Cornet. I must home, and study revenge. [*To lady Brute*] Madam, your humble servant; I must take my leave.

L. B. What, going already, madam?

L. F. I must beg you'll excuse me this once; for really I have eighteen visits to return this afternoon: so you see I'm importun'd by the women as well as the men.

Bel. [*Aside*] And she's quits with them both.

L. F. [*Going*] Nay, you shan't go one step out of the room.

L. B. Indeed I'll wait upon you down.

L. F. No, sweet lady Brute, you know I swoon at ceremony.

L. B. Pray give me leave.

L. F. You know I won't.

L. B. Indeed I must.

L. F. Indeed you shan't.

L. B. Indeed I will.

L. F. Indeed you shan't.

L. B. Indeed I will.

L. F. Indeed you shan't. Indeed, indeed, indeed, you shan't. [*Exit Lady Fan. running; they follow.*

Re-enter Lady Brute, sola.

This impertinent woman has put me out of humour for a fortnight——What an agreeable moment has her foolish visit interrupted! Lord, what a pleasure there is in doing what we should not do!

Re-enter Constant.

Ha! here again?

Const. Tho' the renewing my visit may seem a little irregular, I hope I shall obtain your pardon for it, Madam, when you know I only left the room, lest the lady who was here should have been as malicious in her remarks, as she is foolish in her conduct.

L. B. He, who has discretion enough to be tender of a woman's reputation, carries a virtue about him that may atone for a great many faults.

Const. If it has a title to atone for any, its pretensions must needs be strongest, where the crime is love. I therefore hope I shall be forgiven the attempt I have made upon your heart, since my enterprize has been a secret to all the world but yourself.

L. B. Secrecy indeed, in sins of this kind, is an argument of weight to lessen the punishment; but nothing's a plea, for a pardon entire, without a sincere repentance.

Const. If sincerity in repentance consists in sorrow for offending, no cloister ever inclos'd so true a penitent as I should be. But I hope it cannot be reckon'd an offence to love, where it is a duty to adore.

L. B. 'Tis an offence, a great one, where it would rob a woman of all she ought to be ador'd for, her virtue.

Const. Virtue!—Virtue, alas! is no more like the thing that's call'd so, than 'tis like vice itself.

L. B. If it be a thing of so very little value, why do you so earnestly recommend it to your wives and daughters?

Const. We recommend it to our wives, madam, because we wou'd keep 'em to ourselves; and to our daughters, because we wou'd dispose of 'em to others.

L. B. 'Tis then of some importance, it seems, since you can't dispose of them without it.

Const. That importance, madam, lies in the humour of the country, not in the nature of the thing. Pray what does your ladyship think of a powder'd coat for deep mourning?

L. B. I think, Sir, your sophistry has all the effect that you can reasonably expect it should have; it puzzles, but don't convince.

Const. I'm sorry for it.

L. B. I'm sorry to hear you say so.

Const. Pray why?

L. B. Because if you expected more from it, you have a worse opinion of my understanding than I desire you should have.

Const. [*Aside*] I comprehend her: she would have me set a value upon her chastity, that I might think myself the more oblig'd to her, when she makes me a present of it.

[To her] I beg you will believe I did but rally, madam; I know you judge too well of right and wrong, to be deceiv'd by arguments like those. I hope you'll have so favourable an opinion of my understanding too, to believe the thing call'd virtue has worth enough with me, to pass for an eternal obligation where'er 'tis sacrificed.

L. B. It is, I think, so great a one, as nothing can repay.

Const. Yes; the making the man you love your everlasting debtor.

L. B. When debtors once have borrow'd all we have to lend, they are very apt to grow shy of their creditors company.

Const. That, madam, is only when they are forc'd to borrow of usurers, and not of a generous friend. Let us chuse our creditors, and we are seldom so ungrateful as to shun 'em.

L. B. What think you of Sir John, Sir; I was his free choice?

Const. I think he's married, Madam.

L. B. Does marriage then exclude men from your rule of constancy?

Const. It does. Constancy's a brave, free, haughty, generous agent, that cannot buckle to the chains of wedlock.

L. B. Have you no exceptions to this general rule, as well as to t'other?

Const. Yes, I wou'd, after all, be an exception to it myself, if you were free in power and will to make me so.

L. B. Compliments are well plac'd, where 'tis impossible to lay hold on 'em.

Const. I wou'd to heav'n 'twere possible for you to lay hold on mine, that you might see it is no compliment at all. But since you are already dispos'd of, beyond redemption, to one who does not know the value of the jewel you have put into his hands, I hope you wou'd not think him greatly wrong'd, tho' it shou'd sometimes be look'd on by a friend, who knows how to esteem it as he ought.

L. B. If looking on't alone wou'd serve his turn, the wrong perhaps might not be very great.

Const. Why, what if he should wear it now and then a day, so he gave good security to bring it home again at night?

L. B. Small security, I fancy, might serve for that. One might venture to take his word.

Const. Then where's the injury to the owner?

L. B. 'Tis an injury to him if he think it one. For if happiness be seated in the mind, unhappiness must be so too.

Const. Here I close with you, madam, and draw my conclusive argument from your own position: if the injury lie
in

in the fancy, there needs nothing but secrecy to prevent the wrong.

L. B. [*Going*] A surer way to prevent it, is to hear no more arguments in its behalf.

Const. [*following her*] But, madam——

L. B. But, Sir, 'tis my turn to be discreet now, and not suffer too long a visit.

Const. [*catching her hand*] By heaven, you shall not stir, till you give me hopes that I shall see you again at some more convenient time and place.

L. B. I give you just hopes enough—[*breating from him*] to get loose from you : and that's all I can afford you at this time.

[*Exit running.*]

Constant solus.

Now, by all that's great and good, she's a charming woman. In what extasy of joy she has left me ! for she gave me hope, did she not say she gave me hope ?——hope ! ay ; what hope——enough to make me let her go—why that's enough in conscience. Or, no matter how 'twas spoke ; hope was the word ; it came from her, and it was said to me.

Enter Heartfree.

Ha, Heartfree ! Thou hast done me noble service in prattling to the young gentlewoman without there : Come to my arms, thou venerable bawd, and let me squeeze thee [*Embracing him eagerly*] as a new pair of stays does a fat country girl, when she's carried to court to stand for a maid of honour.

Heartf. Why, what the devil's all this rapture for ?

Const. Rapture ! There's ground for rapture, man ; there's hopes, my Heartfree, hopes, my friend.

Heartf. Hopes ! of what ?

Const. Why, hopes that my lady and I together, (for 'tis more than one body's work) should make Sir John a cuckold.

Heartf. Pr'ythee, what did she say to thee ?

Const. Say ! What did she not say ? she said that——says she——she said——Zoons, I don't know what she said : but she look'd as if she said every thing I'd have her ; and so if thou'lt go to the tavern, I'll treat thee with any thing that gold can buy ; I'll give all my silver amongst the drawers, make a bonfire before the door ; say the Plenipo's have sign'd the peace, and the Bank of England's grown honest. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE opens ; *Lord Rake, Sir John, &c. at a Table, drinking.*

All. Huzza !

L. R. Come, boys, charge again—So—Confusion to all order. Here's liberty of conscience.

All. Huzza !

L. R. Come, sing the song I made this morning. [*L. R. Rep.*]

Rep.] And in peace I'll jog on to the devil. Well, how do you like it, gentlemen?

All. O, admirable!

Sir J. I wou'd not give a fig for a song that is not full of sin and impudence.

L. R. Then my muse is to your taste. But drink away; the night steals upon us; we shall want time to be lewd in. Hey, Page, sally out, firrah, and see what's doing in the camp; we'll beat up their quarters presently.

Page. I'll bring your lordship an exact account.

[Exit Page.]

L. R. Now 'et the spirit of clary go round. Here's to our forlorn hope, courage, knight, victory attends you.

Sir J. And laurels shall crown me; drink away, and be damn'd.

L. R. Again, boys; t'other glass, and d—mn morality.

Sir J. [drunk] Ay—damn morality—and damn the watch. And let the constable be married.

All. Huzza!

Re-enter Page.

L. R. How are the streets inhabited, firrah?

Page. My lord, it's Sunday-night, they are full of drunken citizens.

L. R. Along then, boys, we shall have a feast.

C. B. Along, noble knight.

Sir J. Ay—along Bully; and he that says Sir John Brute is not as drunk and as religious as the drunkenest citizen of them all—is a liar, and the son of a whore.

C. B. Why, that was bravely spoke, and like a free-born Englishman.

Sir J. What's that to you, Sir, whether I am an Englishman or a French man.

C. B. Zoons, you are not angry, Sir?

Sir J. Zoons, I am angry, Sir—for if I'm a free-born Englishman, what have you to do, even to talk of my privileges?

L. R. Why, pr'ythee, knight, don't quarrel here; leave private animosities to be decided by day-light; let the night be employed against the public enemy.

Sir J. My lord, I respect you because you are a man of quality. But I'll make that fellow know I am within a hair's breadth as absolute by my privileges, as the king of France is by his prerogative. He by his prerogative takes money where it is not his due; I by my privilege refuse paying it where I owe it. Liberty and property, and Old England. Huzza!

All. Huzza! *[Exit Sir John reeling, all following him.]*

SCENE,

SCENE, *A Bed-Chamber.*

Enter Lady Brute and Belinda.

L. B. Sure it's late, Belinda, I begin to be sleepy.

Bel. Yes, 'tis near twelve. Will you go to bed?

L. B. To bed, my dear? And by that time I am fallen into a sweet sleep, (or perhaps a sweet dream, which is better and better) Sir *John* will come home roaring drunk, and be overjoy'd he finds me in a condition to be disturb'd.

Bel. O you need not fear him, he's in for all night. The servants say he's gone to drink with my lord Rake.

L. B. Nay, 'tis not very likely, indeed, such suitable company should part presently. What hogs men turn, Belinda, when they grow weary of women.

Bel. And what owls they are, whilst they are fond of 'em.

L. B. But that we may forgive well enough, because they are so upon our accounts. But pr'ythee one word of poor Constant before we go to bed, if it be but to furnish matter for dreams: I dare swear he's talking of me now, or thinking of me at least.

Bel. So he ought, I think; for you ere pleas'd to make him a good round advance to-day, madam.

L. B. Why, I have e'en plagu'd him enough to satisfy any reasonable woman: he has besieged me these two years to no purpose.

Bel. And if he besieged you two years more, he'd be well enough paid, so he had the plundering of you at last.

L. B. That may be; but I'm afraid the town won't be able to hold out much longer: for to confess the truth to you, Belinda, the garrison begins to grow mutinous.

Bel. Then the sooner you capitulate, the better.

L. B. Yet, methinks, I would fain stay a little longer to see you fix'd too, that we might start together, and see who cou'd love longest. What think you, if Heartfree should have a month's mind to you.

Bel. Why faith I cou'd almost be in love with him for despising that foolish, affected Lady Fanciful; but I'm afraid he's too cold ever to warm himself by my fire.

L. B. Then he deserves to be froze to death. Wou'd I were a man for your sake, dear rogue, [*Kissing her.*]

Bel. You'd wish yourself a woman for your own, or the men are mistaken. But if I could make a conquest of this son of Bacchus, and rival his bottle, what shou'd I do with him? He has no fortune, I can't marry him; and sure you wou'd not have me do I don't know what with him.

L. B. Why, if you did, child, 'twou'd be but a good friendly part: if 'twere only to keep me in countenance, whilst I play the fool with Constant.

Bel. Well, if I can't resolve to serve you that way, I may perhaps

perhaps some other, as much to your satisfaction. But pray, how shall we contrive to see these blades again quickly?

L. B. We must e'en have recourse to the old way; make 'em an appointment 'twixt jest and earnest; 'twill look like a frolick, and that you know is a very good thing to save a woman's blushes.

Bel. You advise well; but where shall it be?

L. B. In Spring Garden. But they shan't know their women, till they pull off their masks; for a surprise is the most agreeable thing in the world: and I find myself in a very good humour, ready to do 'em any good turn I can think on.

Bel. Then pray write 'em the necessary billet, without farther delay.

L. B. Let's go into your chamber then, and whilst you say your prayers, I'll do it, child. *Exeunt.*

A C T IV.

S C E N E, Covent Garden.

Enter Lord Rake, Sir John, &c. with Swords drawn.

L. R. **I**S the dog dead?

C. B. No, damn him, I heard him wheeze.

L. R. How the witch his wife howl'd!

C. B. Ay, she'll alarm the watch presently.

L. R. Appear, knight, then; come, you have a good cause to fight for, there's a man murder'd.

Sir J. Is there! then let his ghost be satisfied; for I'll sacrifice a constable to it presently, and burn his body upon his wooden chair.

Enter a Taylor, with a Bundle under his Arm.

C. B. How now; what have we got here? a thief.

Tay. No, an't please you, I'm no thief.

L. R. That we'll see presently: here; let the general examine him.

Sir J. Ay, ay, let me examine him, and I'll lay a hundred pound I find him guilty in spite of his teeth—for he looks—like a—sneaking rascal. Come, firrah, without equivocation or mental reservation, tell me of what opinion you are, and what calling; for by them—I shall guess at your morals.

Tay. An't please you, I'm a dissenting journeyman taylor.

Sir J. Then, firrah, you love lying by your religion, and theft by your trade: and so, that your punishments may be suitable to your crimes—I'll have you first gagg'd—and then hang'd.

Tay. Pray, good worthy gentlemen, don't abuse me: indeed

deed I'm an honest man, and a good workman, tho' I say it, that thou'd not say it.

Sir F. No words, sirrah, but attend your fate.

L. R. Let me see what's in that bundle.

Tag. An't please you, it's my lady's short cloak and wrapping gown.

Sir F. What lady, you reptile, you?

Tag. My lady Brute, an't please your honour.

Sir F. My lady Brute! my wife! the robe of my wife
—with reverence let me approach it. The dear angel
is always taking care of me in danger, and has sent me this
suit of armour to protect me in this day of battle; on they
go.

All. O brave knight!

L. R. Live Don Quixote the second.

Sir F. Sancho, my 'squire, help me on with my armour.

Tag. O dear gentlemen! I shall be quite undone if you
take the sack.

Sir F. Retire, sirrah! and since you carry off your skin,
go home and be happy.

Sir F. So! how d'ye like my shapes now?

L. R. To a miracle! He looks like a queen of the Ama-
zons—but to your arms! gentlemen! the enemy's upon
their march—here's the watch—

Sir F. 'Oons! if it were Alexander the great, at the head
of his army, I wou'd drive him into a horse-pond.

All. Huzza! O brave knight!

Enter Watchmen.

Sir F. See! Here he comes, with all his Greeks about
him.—

Watch. Hey-day! who have we got here?—stand.

Sir F. May-hap not.

Watch. What are you all doing here in the streets at this
time o'night? and who are you, madam, that seems to be
at the head of this noble crew?

Sir F. Sirrah! I am Bonduca, queen of the Welchmen;
and with a leek as long as my pedigree, I will destroy your
Roman legion in an instant—Britons strike Home.

[Snatches a watchman's staff, strikes at the Watch, and falls
down, his party drove off.]

Watch. So! We have got the Queen, however! We'll
make her pay well for her ransom—Come, madam, will
your majesty please to walk before the constable?

Sir F. The constable's a rascal! and you are a son of a
whore!

Watch. A most noble reply, truly! if this be her royal
style, I'll warrant her maids of honour prattle prettily: but
we'll

we'll teach you some of our court-dialect before we part with you, princeſs—away with her to the round-houſe.

Sir F. Hands off, you ruſſians! my honour's dearer to me than my life; I hope you won't be uncivil.

Watch. Away with her.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE, A Bed-Chamber.

Enter Heartfree ſolus.

What the plague ails me?—Love? No, I thank you for that, my heart's rock ſtill—Yet 'tis Belinda that diſturbſ me, that's poſitive—Well, what of all that! Muſt I love her for being troubleſome? At that rate I might love all the women I meet, I-gad. But hold!—tho' I don't love her for diſturbſ me, yet ſhe may diſturb me, becauſe I love her—Ay, that may be, faith. I have dreamt of her, that's certain—Well, ſo I have of my mother; therefore what's that to the purpoſe? Ay, but Belinda runs in my mind waking—and ſo does many a damn'd thing, that I don't care a farthing for—Methinks tho' I would fain be talking to her, and yet I have no buſineſs—Well, am I the firſt man that has had a mind to do an impertinent thing?

Enter Conſtant.

Conſt. How now, Heartfree? what makes you up and dreſs'd ſo ſoon? I thought none but lovers quarrel'd with their beds; I expected to have found you ſnoring, as I uſ'd to do.

Heartf. Why, faith, friend, 'tis the care I have of your affairs, that makes me ſo thoughtful; I have been ſtudying all night how to bring your matter about with Belinda?

Conſt. With Belinda!

Heartf. With my lady, I mean: and faith I have mighty hopes on't. Sure you muſt be very well ſatiſfied with her behaviour to you yeſterday?

Conſt. So well, that nothing but a lover's fears can make me doubt of ſucceſs. But what can this ſudden change proceed from?

Heartf. Why, you ſaw her huſband beat her, did you not?

Conſt. That's true: a huſband is ſcarce to be borne upon any terms, much leſs when he fights with his wife. Methinks, ſhe ſhou'd e'en have cuckolded him upon the very ſpot, to ſhew that after the battle ſhe was maſter of the field.

Heartf. A council of war of women wou'd infallibly have advis'd her to't. But, I confeſs, ſo agreeable a woman as Belinda deſerves better uſage.

Conſt. Belinda again!

Heartf. My lady, I mean. What a pox makes me blunder ſo to-day? [Aside] A plague of this treacherous tongue.

Conſt. Pr'ythee look upon me ſeriouſly, Heartfree—Now
answer

answer me directly : is it my lady, or Belinda, employs your careful thoughts thus ?

Heartf. My lady, or Belinda ?

Const. In love, by this light ; in love.

Heartf. In love !

Const. Nay, ne'er deny it ; for thou'lt do it so awkwardly, 'twill but make the jest fit heavier about thee. My dear friend, I give thee much joy.

Heartf. Why, pr'ythee, you won't persuade me to it, will you ?

Const. That she's mistress of your tongue, that's plain ; and I know you are so honest a fellow, your tongue and heart always go together. But how, but how the devil ? Pha, ha, ha, ha,——

Heartf. Hey-day : why sure you don't believe it in earnest ?

Const. Yes, I do, because I see you deny it in jest.

Heartf. Nay, but look you, Ned——a——deny in jest——a——gadzooks, you know I say——a——when a man denies a thing in jest——a——

Const. Pha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

Heartf. Nay, then we shall have it : what, because a man stumbles at a word : did you never make a blunder ?

Const. Yes ; for I am in love, I own it.

Heartf. Then, so am I—Now laugh till thy soul's glutted with mirth. [*Embracing him.*] But, dear Constant, don't tell the town on't.

Const. Nay then, 'twere almost pity to laugh at thee, after so honest a confession. But tell us a little, Jack, by what new invented arms has this mighty stroke been given ?

Heartf. E'en by that unaccountable weapon, call'd *Je-ne-scai-quoi* : for every thing that can come within the verge of beauty, I have seen it with indifference.

Const. So in few words then ; the *Je-ne-scai-quoi* has been too hard for the quilted petticoat.

Heartf. I gad, I think the *Je-ne-scai-quoi* is in the quilted petticoat ; at least 'tis certain, I ne'er think on't without—a—a *Je-ne-scai-quoi* in every part about me.

Const. Well, but have all your remedies lost their virtue ? Have you turn'd her inside out yet ?

Heartf. I dare not so much as think on't.

Const. But don't the two years fatigue I have had, discourage you ?

Heartf. Yes : I dread what I foresee ; yet cannot quit the enterprize. Like some soldiers, whose courage dwells more in their honour, than their nature : on they go, tho' the body trembles at what the soul makes it undertake.

Const. Nay, if you expect your mistress will use you, as
D your

your profanations against her sex deserve, you tremble justly. But how do you intend to proceed, friend?

Heartf. Thou know'st I'm but a novice; be friendly and advise me.

Const. Why, look you then; I'd have you—serenade and a—write a song—go to church; look like a fool—be very officious: ogle, write and lead out: and who knows, but in a year or two's time, you may be—call'd a troublesome puppy, and sent about your business.

Heartf. That's hard.

Const. Yet thus it oft falls out with lovers, Sir.

Heartf. Pox on me for making one of the number.

Const. Have a care; say no saucy things; 'twill but augment your crime; and if your mistress hears on't, increase your punishment.

Heartf. Pr'ythee say something then to encourage me; you know I help'd you in your distress.

Const. Why then to encourage you to perseverance, that you may be thoroughly ill us'd for your offences; I'll put you in mind, that even the coyest ladies of 'em all are made up of desires, as well as we; and tho' they do hold out a long time, they will capitulate at last. For that thundering engineer, nature, does make such havock in the town, they must surrender at long run, or perish in their own flames.

Enter Footman.

Foot. Sir, there's a porter without with a letter; he desires to give it into your own hands.

Const. Call him in.

Enter Porter.

Const. What, Joe! Is it thee?

Port. An't please you, Sir, I was order'd to deliver this into your own hands, by two well-thap'd ladies, at the New-Exchange. I was at your honour's lodgings, and your servants sent me hither.

Const. 'Tis well, are you to carry any answer?

Port. No, my noble master. They gave me my orders, and whip, they were gone like a maidenhead at fifteen.

Const. Very well; there.

[Gives him money.]

Port. God bless your honour.

[Exit Porter.]

Const. Now let's see what honest, trusty Joe has brought us.

[Reads.]

"If you and your play-fellow can spare time from your business and devotions; don't fail to be at Spring-Garden about eight in the evening. You'll find nothing there but women, so you need bring no other arms than what you usually carry about you."

So, play-fellow: here's something to stay your stomach till your mistress's dish is ready for you.

Heartf.

The PROVOK'D WIFE.

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Heartf. Some of our old batter'd acquaintance. I won't go, not I.

Const. Nay, that you can't avoid; there's honour in the case; 'tis a challenge, and I want a second.

Heartf. I doubt I shall be but a very uselefs one to you; for I'm so dishearten'd by this wound Belinda has given me, I don't think I shall have courage enough to draw my sword.

Const. O, if that be all, come along; I'll warrant you find sword enough for such enemies as we have to deal withal. [*Exeunt.*]

S C E N E, *A Street.*

Enter Constable and Watchmen, with Sir John.

Const. Come, forsooth, come along, if you please! I once in compassion thought to have seen you safe home this morning: but you have been so rampant and abusive all night, I shall see what the justice of peace will say to you.

Sir J. And you shall see what I'll say to the justice of peace, sirrah. [*Watchman knocks at the door.*]

Enter Servant.

Const. Is Mr. Justice at home?

Serv. Yes.

Const. Pray acquaint his worship we have got an unruly woman here, and desire to know what he'll please to have done with her.

Serv. I'll acquaint my master. [*Exit Serv.*]

Sir J. Hark you, constable, what cuckoldly justice is this?

Const. One that knows how to deal with such romps as you are, I'll warrant you.

Enter Justice.

Just. Well, Mr. Constable, what is the matter there?

Const. An't please your worship, this here comical sort of a gentlewoman has committed great outrages to-night. She has been frolicking with my lord Rake and his gang; they attack'd the watch, and I hear there has been a man kill'd: I believe 'tis they have done it.

Sir J. Sir, there may have been murder for ought I know; and 'tis a great mercy there has not been a rape too—that fellow wou'd have ravish'd me.

2d Watch. Ravish! Ravish! O lud! O lud! O lud! Ravish her! why, please your worship, I heard Mr. Constable say he believed she was little better than a maphrodite.

Just. Why truly, she does seem a little masculine about the mouth.

2d Watch. Yes, and about the hands too, an't please your worship. I did but offer in meer civility, to help her up the steps into our apartment, and with her gripen fist thus, ay.

[*Sir John knocks him down.*]

Sir J. Just so, Sir, I fell'd him to the ground like an ox.

Just. Out upon this boisterous woman! out upon her!

Sir J. Mr. Justice, he would have been uncivil: it was in defence of my honour, and I demand satisfaction.

2d Watch. I hope your worship will satisfy her honour in Bridewell; that fist of hers will make an admirable hemp-beater.

Sir J. Sir, I hope you will protect me against that libidinous rascal: I am a woman of quality and virtue too, for all I am in an undress this morning.

Just. Madam, if you expect I shou'd be favourable to you, I desire I may know who you are.

Sir J. Sir, I am any body at your service.

Just. Lady, I desire to know your name.

Sir J. Sir, my name's Mary.

Just. Ay, but your surname, madam?

Sir J. Sir, my surname's the very same with my husband's.

Just. A strange woman this! Who is your husband, pray?

Sir J. Sir John.

Just. Sir John who?

Sir J. Sir John Brute.

Just. Is it possible, madam, you can be my lady Brute?

Sir J. That happy woman, Sir, am I; only a little in my merriment to-night.

Just. I am concern'd for Sir John!

Sir J. Truly, so am I.

Just. I have heard he's an honest gentleman.

Sir J. As ever drunk.

Just. Good lack! Indeed, lady, I'm sorry he has such a wife.

Sir J. I am sorry he has any wife at all.

Just. And so perhaps may he—I doubt you have not given him a very good taste of matrimony.

Sir J. Taste, Sir! Sir, I have scorn'd to stint him to a taste, I have given him a full meal of it.

Just. Indeed, I believe so! But pray, fair lady, may he have given you any occasion for this extraordinary conduct—Does he not use you well?

Sir J. A little upon the rough sometimes.

Just. Ay, any man may be out of humour now and then.

Sir J. Sir, I love peace and quiet, and when a woman don't find that at home, she's apt sometimes to comfort herself with a few innocent diversions abroad.

Just. I doubt he uses you but too well. Pray how does he as to that weighty thing, money? Does he allow you what is proper of that?

Sir J. Sir, I have generally enough to pay the reckoning,

if this son of a whore of a drawer wou'd but bring his bill.

Just. A strange woman this—deos he spend a reasonable portion of his time at home, to the comfort of his wife and children?

Sir *J.* He never gave his wife cause to repine at his being abroad in his life.

Just. Pray, madam, how may he be in the grand matrimonial point—is he true to your bed?

Sir *J.* Chaste! Oons! this fellow asks so many impertinent questions! I gad I believe it is the justice's wife, in the justices clothes.

Just. Pray, madam, (and then I've done) what may be your ladyship's common method of life? if I may presume so far.

Sir *J.* Why, Sir, much that of a woman of quality.

Just. Pray how may you generally pass your time, madam? your morning for example.

Sir *J.* Sir, like a woman of quality—I wake about two o'clock in the afternoon—I stretch—and make a sign for my chocolate—when I have drank three cups—I slide down again upon my back, with my arms over my head, while my two maids put on my stockings—then hanging upon their shoulders, I am trail'd to my great chair, where I sit—and yawn—for my breakfast—if it don't come presently, I lie down upon my couch to say my prayer, while my maid reads me the play-bills.

Just. Very well, madam.

Sir *J.* When the tea is brought in, I drink twelve regular dishes, with eight slices of bread and butter—and half an hour after, I send to the cook to know if the dinner is almost ready.

Just. So! madam!

Sir *J.* By that time my head is half drest, I hear my husband swearing himself into a state of perdition, that the meat's all cold upon the table; to amend which, I come down in an hour more, and have it sent back to the kitchen, to be all drest over again.

Just. Poor man.

Sir *J.* When I have din'd, and my idle servants are presumptuously set down at their ease, to do so too, I call for my coach, to go visit fifty dear friends, of whom I hope I never shall find one at home, while I shall live.

Just. So! there's the morning and afternoon pretty well dispos'd of—pray, madam, how do you pass your evenings?

Sir *J.* Like a woman of spirit, Sir, a great spirit. Give me a box and dice—seven the main, Oons! Sir, I set you a hundred pound! why, do you think women are married

now a-days, to sit at home and mend napkins: Sir, we have nobler ways of passing time.

Just. Mercy upon us, Mr. Constable, what will this age come to?

Const. What will it come to, indeed, if such women as these are not set in the stocks?

Sir *J.* Sir, I have a little urgent business calls upon me; and therefore I desire the favour of you to bring matters to a conclusion.

Just. Madam, if I were sure that business were not to commit more disorders, I would release you.

Sir *J.* None—By my virtue.

Just. Then, Mr. Constable, you may discharge her.

Sir *J.* Sir, your very humble servant. If you please to accept of a bottle—

Just. I thank you kindly, madam; but I never drink in a morning. Good-by-t'ye, madam, good-by-t'ye.

Sir *J.* Good-by-t'ye, good Sir. *[Exit Justice.]* So—now, Mr. Constable, shall you and I go pick up a whore together?

Const. No, thank you, madam; my wife's enough to satisfy any reasonable man.

Sir *J.* *[Aside.]* He, he, he, he, he—the fool is married then. Well, you won't go?

Const. Not I, truly.

Sir *J.* Then I'll go by myself; and you and your wife may go to the devil. *[Exit Sir John.]*

Constable gazing after her.] Why God-a-mercy lady.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE, Spring-Garden.

Constant and Heartfree cross the stage. As they go off, enter Lady Fancyful and Mademoiselle mask'd and dogging 'em.

Const. So; I think we are about the time appointed: let us walk up this way. *[Exeunt.]*

L. *F.* Good: thus far I have dogg'd 'em without being discover'd. 'Tis infallibly some intrigue that brings them to Spring-Garden. How my poor heart is torn and wrackt with fear and jealousy! Yet let it be any thing but that flirt Belinda, and I'll try to bear it. But if it proves her, all that's woman in me shall be employ'd to destroy her.

[Exit after Constant and Heartfree.]

Re-enter Constant and Heartfree. Lady Fancyful and Mademoiselle still following at a distance.

Const. I see no females yet, that have any thing to say to us. I'm afraid we are batter'd.

Heartf. I wish we were; for I'm in no humour to make either them or myself merry.

Const. Nay, I'm sure you'll make them merry enough, if I tell

I tell 'em why you are dull. But pr'ythee why so heavy and sad before you begin to be ill us'd ?

Heartf. For the same reason, perhaps, that you are so brisk and well pleas'd; because both pains and pleasures are generally more considerable in prospect, than when they come to pass.

Enter lady Brute and Belinda, mask'd, and poorly dress'd.

Const. How now ! who are these ? Not our game, I hope.

Heartf. If they are, we are e'en well enough serv'd, to come a hunting here, when we had so much better game in chase elsewhere.

L. F. [*to Mademoiselle.*] So, those are their ladies without doubt. But I'm afraid that Doily stuff is not worne for want of better clothes. They are the very shape and size of Belinda and her aunt.

Madem. So dey be inteed, matarn.

L. F. We'll slip into this close arbor, where we may hear all they say. [*Exeunt Lady Fancyful and Mademoiselle.*]

L. B. What, are you afraid of us, gentlemen ?

Heartf. Why, truly, I think we may, if appearance don't lie.

Bel. Do you always find women what they appear to be, Sir ?

Heartf. No, forsooth ; but I seldom find 'em better than they appear to be.

Bel. Then the outside's best you think ?

Heartf. 'Tis the honestest.

Const. Have a care, Heartfree ; you are relapsing again.

L. B. Why, does the gentleman use to rail at women ?

Const. He has done formerly.

Bel. I suppose he had a very good cause for't. They did not use you so well, as you thought you deserv'd, Sir ?

L. B. They made themselves merry, at your expence, Sir ?

Bel. Laugh'd when you sigh'd.

L. B. Slept while you were waking.

Bel. Had your porter beat.

L. B. And threw your billet-doux in the fire.

Heartf. Hey-day, I shall do more than rail presently.

Bel. Why you won't beat us, will you ?

Heartf. I don't know but I may.

Const. What the devil's coming here ? Sir John in a gown—And drunk, i'faith.

Enter Sir John.

Sir J. What a pox—here's Constant, Heartfree—and two whores I gad—O you covetous rogues ! what have you never a spare punk for your friend—But I'll share with you.

[*He seizes both the women.*]

Heartf. Why, what the plague have you been doing, knight ?

Sir

Sir J. Why, I have been beating the watch, and scandalizing the clergy.

Heartf. A very good account, truly.

Sir J. And what do you think I'll do next?

Const. Nay, that no man can guess.

Sir J. Why, if you'll let me sup with you, I'll treat both your strumpets.

L. B. [*Aside.*] O Lord, we're undone.

Heartf. No, we can't sup together, because we have some affairs elsewhere. But if you'll accept of these two ladies, we'll be so complaisant to you, to resign our right in 'em.

Bel. [*Aside.*] Lord, what shall we do?

Sir J. Let me see, their clothes are such damn'd clothes, they won't pawn for the reckoning.

Heartf. Sir John, your servant. Raptures attend you.

Const. Adieu ladies, make much of the gentleman.

L. B. Why sure you won't leave us in the hands of a drunken fellow to abuse us.

Sir J. Who do you call a drunken fellow, you slut you? I'm a man of quality; the king has made me a knight.

Heartf. Ay, ay, you are in good hands; adieu, adieu.

[Heartf. runs off.]

L. B. The devil's hands: let me go, or I'll—for heaven's sake protect us.

[She breaks from him, runs to Constant, twitching off her mask, and clapping it on again.]

Sir J. I'll devil you, you jade you. I'll demolish your ugly face.

[Re-enter Heartfree. Belinda runs to him, and shews her face.]

Heartf. Hold, thou mighty man; look ye, Sir, we did but jest with you. These are ladies of our acquaintance that we had a mind to frighten a little, but now you must leave us.

Sir J. Oons, I won't leave you, not I.

Heartf. Nay, but you must though; and therefore make no words on't.

Sir J. Then you are a couple of damn'd uncivil fellows. And I hope your punks will give you sauce to your mutton.

[Exit Sir John.]

L. B. Oh, I shall never come to myself again, I'm so frighten'd.

Const. 'Tis a narrow 'scape indeed.

Bel. Women must have frolics, you see, whatever they cost 'em.

Heartf. This might have prov'd a dear one tho'.

L. B. You are the more oblig'd to us for the risk we run upon your accounts.

Const. And I hope you'll acknowledge something due to our

our knight-errantry, ladies. This is the second time we have deliver'd you.

L. B. 'Tis true ; and since we see fate has design'd you for our guardians, 'twill make us the more willing to trust ourselves in your hands. But you must not have the worse opinion of us for our innocent frolic.

Heartf. Ladies, you may command our opinions in every thing that is to your advantage.

Bel. Then, Sir, I command you to be of opinion, that women are sometimes better than they appear to be.

[Lady Brute and Constant talk apart.]

Heartf. Madam, you have made a convert of me in every thing. I'm grown a fool. I cou'd be fond of a woman.

Bel. I thank you, Sir, in the name of the whole sex.

Heartf. Which sex nothing but yourself could ever have aton'd for.

Bel. Now has my vanity a devilish itch to know in what my merit consists.

Heartf. In your humility, madam, that keeps you ignorant it consists at all.

Bel. One other compliment, with that serious face, and I hate you for ever after.

Heartf. Some women love to be abus'd : is that it you wou'd be at?

Bel. No, not that neither : but I'd have men talk plainly what's fit for women to hear ; without putting 'em either to a real, or an affected blush.

Heartf. Why then, in as plain terms as I can find to express myself, I could love you even to matrimony itself almost, I gad.

Bel. Just as Sir John did her ladyship there. — What think you ? don't you believe one month's time might bring you down to the same indifference, only clad in a little better manners, perhaps ? Well, you men are unaccountable things, mad till you have your mistresses, and then stark mad till you are rid of 'em again. Tell me honestly, is not your patience put to a much severer trial after possession than before ?

Heartf. With a great many, I must confess it is, to our eternal scandal ; but I—dear creature, do but try me.

Bel. That's the surest way, indeed, to know, but not the safest. [To lady Brute.] Madam, are not you for taking a turn in the great walk ? it's almost dark, nobody will know us.

L. B. Really I find myself something idle, Belinda : besides I doat upon this little odd private corner. But don't let my lazy fancy confine you. [Const. Aside.] So, she wou'd be left alone with me, that's well.

Bel.

Bel. Well, we'll take one turn, and come to you again.
[To Heartf.] Come, Sir, shall we go pry into the secrets of the gadren? who knows what discoveries we may make?

Heartf. Madam, I'm at your service.

Const. *[To Heartfree Aside.]* Don't make too much haste back; for d'ye hear—I may be busy.

Heartf. Enough. *[Exeunt Belinda and Heartfree.]*

L. B. Sure you think me scandalously free, Mr. Constant. I'm afraid I shall lose your good opinion of me.

Const. My good opinion, madam, is like your cruelty, ne'er to be remov'd.

L. B. Indeed I doubt you much: why, suppose you had a wife, and she should entertain a gallant?

Const. If I gave her just cause, how cou'd I justly condemn her?

L. B. Ah; but you'd differ widely about just causes.

Const. But blows can bear no dispute.

L. B. Nor ill manners much, truly.

Const. Then no woman upon earth has so just a cause as you have.

L. B. But can a husband's faults release my duty?

Const. In equity, without doubt. And where laws dispense with equity, equity should dispense with laws.

L. B. Pray let's leave this dispute; for you men have as much witchcraft in your arguments, as women have in their eyes.

Const. But whilst you attack me with your charms, 'tis but reasonable I assault you with mine.

L. B. The case is not the same. What mischief we do, we can't help, and therefore are to be forgiven.

Const. Beauty soon obtains pardon, for the pain that it gives, when it applies the balm of compassion to the wound: but a fine face, and a hard heart, is almost as bad as an ugly face and a soft one; both very troublesome to many a poor gentleman.

L. B. Yes, and to many a poor gentlewoman too, I can assure you. But pray, which of 'em is it, that most afflicts you?

Const. Your glass and conscience will inform you, madam. But for heav'n's sake (for now I must be serious) if pity, or if gratitude can move you: *[Taking her hand.]* If constancy and truth have power to tempt you: if love, if adoration can affect you, give me at least some hopes, that time may do, what you perhaps mean never to perform; 'twill ease my sufferings, tho' not quench my flame.

L. B. Your sufferings eas'd, your flame wou'd soon abate: and that I wou'd preserve, not quench it, Sir.

Const. Wou'd you preserve it, nourish it with favours; for that's the food it naturally requires.

L. B.

L. B. Yet on that natural food, 'twould surfeit soon, shou'd I resolve to grant all you wou'd ask.

Const. And in refusing all, you starve it. Forgive me, therefore, since my hunger rages, if I at last grow wild, and in my frenzy force at least this from you. [*Kissing her hand.*] Or if you'd have my flame soar higher still, then grant me this, and this, and thousands more. [*Kissing first her hand, then her neck.*] [*Aside.*] For now's the time she melts into compassion.

L. B. O heavens! Let me go.

Const. Ay, go, ay: where shall we go, my charming angel——into this private arbour——Nay, let's lose no time——moments are precious.

L. B. And lovers wild. Pray let us stop here; at least for this time.

Const. 'Tis impossible; he that has power over you, can have none over himself.

[*As he is forcing her into the arbour, Lady Fancyful and Mademoiselle bolt out upon them, and run over the stage.*]

L. B. Ah; I'm lost.

L. F. Fe, fe, fe, fe, fe.

Madem. Fe, fe, fe, fe, fe.

Const. Death and furies, who are these?

L. B. O heavens! I'm out of my wits; if they knew me, I am ruin'd.

Const. Don't be frighten'd: ten thousand to one they are strangers to you.

L. B. Whatever they are, I won't stay here a moment longer.

Const. Whither will you go?

L. B. Home, as if the devil were in me. Lord, where's this Belinda now?

Enter Belinda and Heartfree.

O! 'tis well you are come; I'm so frighten'd, my hair stands an end. Let's be gone, for heaven's sake.

Bel. Lord what's the matter?

L. B. The devil's the matter; here's a couple of women have done the most impertinent thing. Away, away, away, away, away. [*Exit running.*]

A C T V.

SCENE, *Lady Fancyful's House.*

Enter Lady Fancyful and Mademoiselle.

L. F. **W**ELL Mademoiselle; did you dodge the filthy things?

Madem. O que ouy, madame.

L. F. And where are they?

Madem. Au logis.

L. F.

L. F. What, men and all ?

Madem. Tous ensemble.

L. F. O confidence ! What, carry their fellows to their own house ?

Madem. C'est que le mari n'y est pas.

L. F. No, so I believe truly. But he shall be there, and quick too, if I can find him out. Well, 'tis a prodigious thing, to see when men and women get together, how they fortify one another in their impudence. But if that drunken fool, her husband, be to be found in e'er a tavern in town, I'll send him amongst 'em ; I'll spoil their sport.

Madem. En vérité, madame, ce seroit dommage.

L. F. 'Tis in vain to oppose it, *Mademoiselle* ; therefore never go about it. For I am the steadiest creature in the world—when I have determin'd to do mischief. So come along. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE, *Sir John Brute's House.*

Enter Constant, Heartfree, Lady Brute, Belinda, and Lovewell.

L. B. But are you sure you don't mistake, Lovewell ?

Lov. Madam, I saw 'em all go into the tavern together, and my master was so drunk he cou'd scarce stand.

L. B. Then, gentlemen, I believe we may venture to let you stay, and play at cards with us, an hour or two : for they'll scarce part till morning.

Bel. I think, 'tis pity they should ever part.

Const. The company that's here, madam.

L. B. Then, Sir, the company that's here, must remember to part itself in time.

Const. Madam, we don't intend to forfeit your future favours, by an indiscreet usage of this. The moment you give us the signal, we than't fail to make our retreat.

L. B. Upon those conditions then let us sit down to cards.

Enter Lovewell.

Lov. O lord, madam, here's my master just staggering in upon you ; he has been quarrelsome yonder, and they have kick'd him out of the company.

L. B. Into the closet, gentlemen, for heaven's sake ; I'll wheedle him to bed, if possible.

[*Const. and Heartf. run into the closet.*]

Enter Sir John, all dirt and bloody.

L. B. Ah—ah—he's all over blood.

Sir J. What the plague does the woman—squall for ? did you never see a man in pickle before ?

L. B. Lord, where have you been ?

Sir J. I have been at-cuffs.

L. B. I fear that is not all. I hope you are not wounded.

Sir J. Sound as a roach, wife.

L. B.

L. B. I'm mighty glad to hear it.

Sir J. You know—I think you lye.

L. B. You do me wrong to think so. For heaven's my witness, I had rather see my own blood trickle down, than yours.

Sir J. Then will I be crucify'd.

L. B. 'Tis a hard fate, I shou'd not be believ'd.

Sir J. 'Tis a damn'd atheistical age, wife.

L. B. I am sure I have given you a thousand tender proofs, how great my care is of you. But, spite of all your cruel thoughts, I'll still persist, and at this moment, if I can, persuade you to lie down and sleep a little.

Sir J. Why—do you think I am drunk—you slut, you?

L. B. Heaven forbid, I shou'd; but I'm afraid you are feverish. Pray let me feel your pulse.

Sir J. Stand off, and be damn'd.

L. B. Why, I see your distemper in your very eyes. You are all on fire. Pray, go to bed; let me intreat you.

Sir B. —Come kiss me, then.

L. B. [*Kissing him.*] There: now go. [*Aside.*] He stinks like poison.

Sir J. I see it goes damnable against your stomach—And therefore—Kiss me again.

L. B. Nay, now you fool me.

Sir J. Do't, I say.

L. B. [*Aside.*] Ah lord have mercy upon me. Well;—there: now will you go?

Sir J. Now, wife, you shall see my gratitude. You gave me two kisses—I'll give you—two hundred. [*Kisses and tumbles her.*]

L. B. O Lord: pray Sir John be quiet. Heavens, what a pickle am I in!

Bel. [*Aside.*] If I were in her pickle, I'd call my gallant out of the closet, and he shou'd cudgel him soundly.

Sir J. So, now you being as dirty and as nasty as myself, we may go pig together. But first I must have a cup of your cold tea, wife. [*Going to the closet.*]

L. B. O I'm ruin'd! There's none there, my dear.

Sir J. I'll warrant you, I'll find some, my dear.

L. B. You can't open the door, the lock's spoil'd; I have been turning and turning the key this half hour to no purpose. I'll send for the smith to-morrow.

Sir J. There's ne'er a smith in Europe can open a door with more expedition than I can do—As for example—Pou. [*He bursts open the door with his foot.*]—How now? What the devil have we got here?—Constant,—Heartfree,—And two whores again, I gad—This is the worst cold tea—that ever I met with in my life—

Enter Constant and Heartfree.

L. B. [*Aside.*] O Lord, what will become of us?

E

Sir

Sir J. Gentlemen—I am your very humble servant—I give you many thanks—I see you take care of my family—I shall do all I can to return the obligation.

Const. Sir, how oddly soever this business may appear to you, you'd have no cause to be uneasy, if you knew the truth of all things; your lady is the most virtuous woman in the world, and nothing has pass'd, but an innocent frolic.

Heartf. Nothing else, upon my honour, Sir.

Sir J. You are both very civil gentlemen—and my wife, there, is a very civil gentlewoman: therefore I don't doubt but many civil things have pass'd between you. Your very humble servant.

L. B. [*Aside to Const.*] Pray be gone: he's so drunk he can't hurt us to-night, and to-morrow morning you shall hear from us.

Const. I'll obey you, madam. Sir, when you are cool, you'll understand and reason better. So then I shall take the pains to inform you. If not—I wear a sword, Sir; and so good-by-tye. Come along, Heartfree. [*Exeunt.*]

Sir J. Wear a sword, Sir—and what of all that, Sir? he comes to my house; eats my meat; lies with my wife; dishonours my family; gets a bastard to inherit my estate—and when I ask a civil account of all this—Sir, says he, I wear a sword—wear a sword, Sir? Yes, Sir, says he, I wear a sword.—It may be a good answer at cross purposes; but 'tis a damn'd one to a man in my whimsical circumstance—Sir, says he, I wear a sword! [*To lady Brute.*] And what do you wear now? ha! tell me. [*Sitting down in a great chair.*] What you are modest, and can't—why then I'll tell you, you slut, you. You wear—an impudent lewd face—A damn'd, designing heart—and a tail—and a tail full of—
[*He falls fast asleep snoring.*]

L. B. So; thanks to kind heaven, he's fast for some hours.

Bel. 'Tis well he is so, that we may have time to lay our story handsomely; for we must lye like the devil to bring ourselves off.

L. B. What shall we say, Belinda?

Bel. [*misg.*]—I'll tell you: it must all light upon Heartfree and I. We'll say he has courted me some time, but for reasons unknown to us, has ever been very earnest the thing might be kept from Sir John. That therefore hearing him upon the stairs, he run into the closet, tho' against our will, and Constant with him, to prevent jealousy. And to give this a good impudent face of truth, (that I may deliver you from the trouble you are in) I'll e'en, if he pleases, marry him.

L. B. I'm beholden to you, cousin; but that wou'd be carrying the jest a little too far for your own sake: you know he's a younger brother, and has nothing.

Bel. 'Tis true: but I like him, and have fortune enough

to keep above extremity : I can't say, I would live with him in a cell, upon love and bread and butter : but I had rather have the man I love, and a middle state of life, than that gentleman in the chair there, and twice your ladyship's splendor.

L. B. In truth, niece, you are in the right on't : but 'tis late : let's end our discourse for to-night, and out of an excess of charity, take a small care of that nasty drunken thing there—do but look at him, Belinda.

Bel. Ah——'tis a savoury dish.

L. B. As savoury as 'tis, I'm cloy'd with't. Pr'ythee call the butler to take away.

Bel. Call the butler?—call the scavenger! [*To a servant within.* Who's there? call Rafor! let him take away his master, scour him clean with a little soap and sand, and for put him to bed.

L. B. Come, Belinda, I'll e'en lie with you to-night : and in the morning we'll send for our gentlemen to set this matter even.

Bel. With all my heart.

L. B. Good night, my dear.

[*Making a low courtesy to Sir John.*

Both. Ha, ha, ha.

[*Exeunt*

Enter Rafor.

Raf. My lady there's a wag—my master there's a cuckold. Marriage is a slippery thing—women have deprav'd appetites—my lady's a wag ; I have heard all ; I have seen all ; I understand all ; and I'll tell all ; for my little Frenchwoman loves news dearly. This story will gain her heart, or nothing will. [*To his master.*] Come, Sir, your head's too full of fumes at present, to make room for your jealousy ; but I reckon we shall have rare work with you, when your pate's empty. Come to your kennel, you cuckoldy, drunken sot, you.

[*Carries him out on his back.*

SCENE, *Lady Fanciful's House.*

Enter Lady Fanciful and Mademoiselle.

L. F. But, why did you not tell me before, Mademoiselle, that Rafor and you were fond ?

Madem. De modesty hinder me, matam.

L. F. Why truly modesty does often hinder us from doing things we have an extravagant mind to. But does he love you well enough yet, to do any thing you bid him? Do you think, to oblige you, he wou'd speak scandal ?

Madem. Matam, to oblige your ladyship, he shall speak blasphemy.

L. F. Why then, Mademoiselle, I'll tell you what you shall do. You shall engage him to tell his master, all that pass'd at Spring Garden : I have a mind he shou'd know what a wife and a niece he has got.

Madem. Il le fera, madame.

E 2

Enter a footman, who speaks to Mademoiselle apart.

Foot. Mademoiselle, yonder's Mr. Rafor desires to speak with you.

Madem. Tell him, I come presently. [*Exit footman.*] Rafor be dere, matam.

L. F. That's fortunate: well, I'll leave you together. And if you find him stubborn, Mademoiselle—hark you—don't refuse him a few little reasonable liberties, to put him into humour.

Madem. Laissez moi faire. [*Exit Lady Fan.*]

[*Rafor peeps in; and seeing Lady Fanciful gone, runs to Mademoiselle, takes her about the neck, and kisses her.*]

Madem. How now, confidence!

Raf. How now, modesty!

Madem. Who make you so familiar, sirrah?

Raf. My impudence, hussy.

Madem. Stand off, rogue-face.

Raf. Ah—Mademoiselle—great news at our house.

Madem. Why, vat be de matter?

Raf. The matter?—Why uptails, all's the matter.

Madem. Tu te moque de moi.

Raf. Now do you long to know the particulars: the time when: the place where: the manner how. But I won't tell you a word more.

Madem. Nay, den dou kill me, Rafor.

Raf. Come, kiss me, then.

Madem. Nay, pridee tell me. [*Clapping his hands behind.*]

Raf. Good-by-t'ye.

[*Going.*]

Madem. Hold, hold: I will kiss-dee.

[*Kissing him.*]

Raf. So, that's civil: Why now, my pretty Poll; my goldfinch; my little waterwagtail—you must know, that—Come, kiss me again.

Madem. I won't kiss de no more.

Raf. Good-by-t'ye.

[*Going.*]

Madem. Doucement; dere; es tu content? [*Kissing him.*]

Raf. So: now I'll tell thee all. Why, the news is, that Cuckoldom in folio is newly printed; and Matrimony in quarto is just going into the press. Will you buy any books Mademoiselle?

Madem. Tu parle comme un libraire; de devil no understand dee.

Raf. Why then, that I may make myself intelligible to a waiting-woman, I'll speak like a valet de chamber. My lady has cuckolded my master.

Madem. Bon.

Raf. Which we take very ill from her hands, I can tell her that. We can't yet prove matter of fact upon her.

Madem. N'importe.

Raf. But we can prove that matter of fact had like to have been upon her.

Madem. Oui-da.

Raf. For we have such terrible circumstances.

Madem. Sans doute.

Raf. That any man of parts may draw tickling conclusions from 'em.

Madem. Fort bien.

Raf. We found a couple of tight well-built gentlemen, stuf into her ladyship's closet.

Madem. Le diable.

Raf. And I, in my particular person, have discover'd a most damnable plot, how to persuade my poor master, that all this hide and seek, this Will in the Wisp, has no other meaning than a christian marriage for sweet Mrs. Belinda.

Madem. Une marriage? Ah les droles.

Raf. Don't you interrupt me, hussy; 'tis agreed, I say. And my innocent lady, to wriggle herself out at the back-door of the business, turns marriage-bawd to her niece, and resolves to deliver up her fair body, to be tumbled and mumbled, by that young liquorish whipster Heartfree. Now are you satisfy'd?

Madem. No.

Raf. Right woman; always gaping for more.

Madem. Dis be all den, dat you know?

Raf. All? ay, and a great deal too, I think.

Madem. Dou be fool, dou know noting.—Ecoute, mon pauvre Rasor. Dou sees des two eyes?—Des two eyes have see de devil.

Raf. The woman's mad.

Madem. In Spring-garden, dat rogue Constant meet dy lady.

Raf. Bon.

Madem.——I'll tell dee no more.

Raf. Nay, pr'ythee, my swan.

Madem. Come, kifs me den.

[Clapping her hands behind her, as he did before.]

Raf. I won't kifs you, not I.

Madem. Adieu.

[Going.]

Raf. Hold—now proceed.

Gives her a hearty kiss.

Madem. A ça—I hide myself in one cunning place, where I hear all, and see all. First dy drunken master come mal à propos; but de sot no know his own dear wife, so he leave her to her sport.—Den de game begin. De lover say soft ting: de lady look upon de ground. [As she speaks, Rasor still acts the man, and she the woman.] He takes her by de hand: she turn her head on oder way. Den he squeeze very hard: den she pull—very softly. Den he take her in his arm: den she give him leetel pat. Den he kifs her tettons; den she say—Pish, nay see. Den he tremble: den she sigh. Den he pull her into de arbour: den she pinch him.

Raf. Ay, but not so hard, you baggage you.

Madem. Den he grow bold: she grow weak, he tro her down, il tombe dessus; le diable assist, il emport tout; [Rasor struggles with her, as if he would throw her down] stand off, firrah.

Raf. You have set me a fire, you jade, you.

Madem. Den go to de river and quench dyself.

Raf. What an unnatural harkot this!

Madem. Rasor. [Looking languishingly on him.]

Raf. Mademoiselle.

Madem. Dou no love me?

Raf. Not love thee?—More than a Frenchman does soup.

Madem. Den dou will refuse nothing dat I bid dee?

Raf. Don't bid me be damn'd then.

Madem. No, only tell dy master, all I have tell dee of dy laty.

Raf. Why, you little malicious strumpet, you; shou'd you like to be serv'd so?

Madem. Dou dispute den?—Adieu.

Raf. Hold—But why wilt thou make me be such a rogue, my dear?

Madem. Voilà un vrai Anglois! il est amoureux, et cependant il veut raisonner. Va t'en au diable.

Raf. Hold once more: in hopes thou'lt give me up thy body, I'll make a present of my honesty.

Madem. Bon, écoute donc;—If dou fail me—I never tee de more—if dou obey me—Je m'abandonne a toi à toi.

[She takes him about the neck, and gives him a smacking kiss.]

[Exit Mademoiselle.]

Rasor. [Licking his lips.] Not be a rogue?—Amor vincit omnia. [Exit Rasor.]

Enter Lady Fancyful and Mademoiselle.

L. F. Marry, say ye? will the two things marry?

Madem. On le va faire, madame.

L. F. Look you, Mademoiselle, in short, I can't bear it—no; I find I can't—if once I see 'em a bed together I shall have ten thousand thoughts in my head will make me run distracted. Therefore run and call Rasor back immediately; for something must be done to stop this impertinent wedding. If I can but defer it four and twenty hours, I'll make such work about town, with that little peit slut's reputation, he shall as soon marry a witch.

Madem. [Aside.] La voilà bien intentionnée. [Exit.]

S C E N E, Constant's Lodgings.

Enter Constant and Heartfree.

Const. But what dost think will become of this business?

Heartf. 'Tis easier to think what will not come on't.

Const. What's that?

Heartf. A challenge. I know the knight too well for that;

that; his dear body will always prevail upon his noble soul to be quiet.

Const. But though he dare not challenge me, perhaps he may venture to challenge his wife.

Heartf. Not if you whisper him in the ear, you won't have him do't, and there's no other way left that I see. For as drunk as he was, he'll remember you and I were where we shou'd not be; and I don't think him quite blockhead enough yet, to be persuaded we were got into his wife's closet only to peep into her prayer-book.

Enter a servant with a letter.

Serv. Sir, here's a letter, a porter brought it.

Const. O ho, here's instructions for us.

[*Reads.*

"The accident that has happen'd has touch'd our invention to the quick. We would fain come off without your help; but find that's impossible. In a word, the whole business must be thrown upon a matrimonial intrigue between your friend and mine. But if the parties are not fond enough to go quite through with the matter, 'tis sufficient for our turn, they own the design. We'll find pretences enough to break the match. Adieu."

—Well, women for invention! How long wou'd my block-head have been producing this! — Hey, Heartfree. What musing, man? Pr'ythee be chearful: what say'st thou, friend, to this matrimonial remedy?

Heartf. Why, I say, it's worse than the disease.

Const. Here's a fellow for you: there's beauty and money on her side: and love up to the ears on his: and yet——

Heartf. And yet, I think, I may reasonably be allow'd to boggle at marrying the niece, in the very moment that you are debauching the aunt.

Const. Why, truly, there may be something in that. But have not you a good opinion enough of your own parts, to believe you cou'd keep a wife to yourself?

Heartf. I shou'd have, if I had a good opinion enough of hers, to believe she cou'd do as much by me. For to do 'em right, after all, the wife seldom rambles, till the husband shews her the way.

Const. 'Tis true, a man of real worth scarce ever is a cuckold, but by his own fault. Women are not naturally lewd; there must be something to urge 'em to it. They'll cuckold a churl, out of revenge; a fool, because they despise him; a beast, because they loath him. But when they make bold with a man they once had a well-grounded value for, 'tis because they first see themselves neglected by him.

Heartf. Well then, shall I marry or die a maid?

Const. Why faith, Heartfree, matrimony is like an army going to engage. Love's the forlorn hope, which is soon cut off!

off! the marriage knot is the main body, which may stand buff a long long time; and repentance is the rear-guard, which rarely gives ground, as long as the main body has a being.

Heartf. Conclusion then; you advise me to whore on as you do.

Const. That's not concluded yet. For tho' marriage be a lottery, in which there are a wond'rous many blanks; yet there is one inestimable lot, in which the only heaven on earth is written. Wou'd your kind fate but guide your hand to that, tho' I were wrapt in all that luxury itself could clothe me with, I still shou'd envy you.

Heartf. And justly too; for to be capable of loving one, doubtless, is better than to possess a thousand. But how far that capacity's in me, alas, I know not.

Const. But you wou'd know.

Heartf. I wou'd so.

Const. Matrimony will inform you. Come, one flight of resolution carries you to the land of experience; where in a very moderate time, you'll know the capacity of your soul and your body both, or I'm mistaken. [Exit.

S C E N E, Sir John Brute's House.

Enter lady Brute and Belinda.

Bel. Well, madam, what answer have you from 'em?

L. B. That they'll be here this moment. I fancy 'twill end in a wedding: I'm sure he's a fool if it don't. Ten thousand pounds, and such a lass as you are is no contemptible offer to a younger brother. But are not you under strange agitations? Pr'ythee, how does your pulse beat?

Bel. High and low, I have much a-do to be valiant: is it not very strange to go to bed with a man?

L. B. Um—it is a little odd at first, but it will soon grow easy to you.

Enter Constant and Heartfree.

Good-morrow, gentlemen: how have you slept after your adventure?

Heartf. Some careful thoughts, ladies, on your accounts, have kept us waking.

Bel. And some careful thoughts on your own, I believe, have hinder'd you from sleeping. Pray, how does this matrimonial project relish with you?

Heartf. Why, faith, e'en as storming towns does with soldiers, where the hopes of delicious plunder banishes the fear of being knock'd on the head.

Bel. Is it then possible, after all, that you dare think of downright lawful wedlock?

Heartf. Madam, you have made me so fool-hardy, I dare do anything.

Bel. Then, Sir, I challenge you, and matrimony's the spot where I expect you.

Heartf. 'Tis enough; I'll not fail [*Aside.*] So, now, I am in for Hobbe's voyage; a great leap in the dark.

L. B. Well, gentleman, this matter being concluded then, have you got your lessons ready; for Sir John is grown such an atheist of late, he'll believe nothing upon easy terms?

Const. We'll find ways to extend his faith, madam. But pray how do you find him this morning?

L. B. Most lamentably morose, chewing the cud after last night's discovery, of which however he has but a confus'd notion e'en now. But I'm afraid the valet de chambre has told him all; for they are very busy together at this moment. When I told him of Belinda's marriage, I had no other answer but a grunt: from which, you may draw what conclusions you think fit. But to your notes, gentlemen, he's here.

Enter Sir John and Raser.

Const. Good-morrow, Sir.

Heartf. Good-morrow, Sir John; I'm very sorry my indiscretion shou'd cause so much disorder in your family.

Sir J. Disorders generally come from indiscretion, Sir; 'tis no strange thing at all.

L. B. I hope, my dear, you are satisfied there was no wrong intended you.

Sir J. None, my dove.

Bel. If not, I hope, my consent to marry Mr. Heartfree will convince you. For as little as I know of amours, Sir, I can assure you, one intrigue is enough to bring four people together, without further mischief.

Sir J. And I know too, that intrigues tend to procreation of more kinds than one. One intrigue will beget another, as soon as beget a son or a daughter.

Const. I am very sorry, Sir, to see you still seem unsatisfy'd with a lady, whose more than common virtue, I am sure, were the my wife, shou'd meet a better usage.

Sir J. Sir, if her conduct has put a trick upon her virtue, her virtue's the bubble, but her husband's the loser.

Const. Sir, you have received a sufficient answer already, to justify both her conduct and mine. You'll pardon me for meddling in your family-affairs; but I perceive I am the man you are jealous of, and therefore it concerns me.

Sir J. Wou'd it did not concern me, and then I shou'd not care who it concern'd.

Const. Well, Sir, if truth and reason won't content you, I know but one way more, which, if you think fit, you may take.

Sir J. Lord, Sir, you are very hasty: if I had been found at prayers in your wife's closet, I should have allow'd you twice as much time to come to yourself in.

Const. Nay, Sir, if time be all you want, we have no quarrel.

Heartf. I told you how the sword wou'd work upon him.

[*Sir John muses.*]

Const. Let him muse; however, I'll lay fifty pounds our foreman brings us in, Not Guilty.

Sir J. [Aside.] 'Tis well—'tis very well—In spite of that young jade's matrimonial intrigue, I am a downright stinking cuckold—Here they are—Boo—[*Putting his hand to his forehead.*] Methinks, I could butt with a bull. What the plague did I marry her for? I knew she did not like me; if she had, she wou'd have lain with me! for I wou'd have done so, because I lik'd her; but that's past, and I have her. And now, what shall I do with her?—If I put my horns into my pocket, she'll grow insolent—if I don't, that goat there, that stallion, is ready to whip me thro' the guts—The debate then is reduc'd to this; shall I die a hero, or live a rascal?—Why, wiser men than I have long since concluded, that a living dog is better than a dead lion—[*To Const. and Heartf.*] Gentlemen, now my wine and my passion are governable, I must own, I have never observ'd any thing in my wife's course of life, to back me in my jealousy of her: but jealousy's a mark of love; so she need not trouble her head about it, as long as I make no words on't.

Lady Fanciful enters disguis'd, and addresses Belinda apart.

Const. I'm glad to see your reason rule at last. Give me your hand: I hope you'll look upon me as you are wont.

Sir J. Your humble servant. [*Aside.*] A wheedling son of a whore.

Heartf. And that I may be sure you are friends with me too, pray give me your consent to wed your niece.

Sir J. Sir, you have it with all my heart: damn me if you han't. [*Aside.*] 'Tis time to get rid of her: a young pert pimp: she'll make an incomparable bawd in a little time.

Enter a servant, who gives Heartfree a letter.

Bel. Heartfree your husband, say you? 'Tis impossible.

L. F. Wou'd to kind heaven it were! Butt 'tis too true; and in the world there lives not such a wretch. I'm young; and either I have been flatter'd by my friends, as well as glass, or nature has been kind and generous to me. I had a fortune too was greater far than he cou'd ever hope for; but with my heart I am robb'd of all the rest. I am slighted and I'm beggar'd both at once; I have scarce a bare subsistence from the villain, yet dare complain to none; for he has sworn, if ever 'tis known I am his wife, he'll murder me. *Weeping.*

Bel. The traitor.

L. F. I accidentally was told he courted you: charity soon prevail'd upon me to prevent your misery: and, as you see,

see, I'm still so generous, even to him, as not to suffer he should do any thing, for which the law might take away his life. *[Weeping.]*

Bel. Poor creature! How I pity her!

[They continue talking aside.]

Heartf. (Aside.) Death and damnation! — Let me read it again. *(reads.)* "Tho' I have a particular reason not to let you know who I am till I see you; yet you'll easily believe 'tis a faithful friend that gives you this advice. I have lain with Belinda (Good!) — I have a child by her (better and better!) which is now at nurse; (Heaven be prais'd!) and I think the foundation laid for another; (Ha! — Old True-penny!) — No rack cou'd have tortur'd this story from me; but friendship has done it. I heard of your design to marry her, and cou'd not see you abus'd. Make use of my advice, but keep my secret till I ask you for't again. Adieu."

Exit Lady Fancyful.

(Const. to Bel.) Come, madam, shall we send for the parson? I doubt here's no business for the lawyer: younger brothers have nothing to settle but their hearts, and that I believe my friend here has already done very faithfully.

Bel. (Scornfully.) Are you sure, Sir, there are no old mortgages upon it?

Heartf. (Coldly.) If you think there are, madam, it mayn't be amiss to defer the marriage till you are sure they are paid off.

Bel. We'll defer it as long as you please, Sir.

Heartf. The more time we take to consider on't, madam, the less apt we shall be to commit oversights: therefore, if you please, we will put it off for just nine months.

Bel. Guilty consciences make men cowards; I don't wonder you want time to resolve.

Heartf. And they make women desperate; I don't wonder you were so quickly determin'd.

Bel. What does the fellow mean?

Heartf. What does the lady mean?

Sir J. Zoons what do you both mean?

Heartf. and Bel. walk chafing about.

Raf. (Aside.) Here is so much sport going to be spoil'd it makes me ready to weep again. A pox o' this impertinent lady Fancyful, and her plots, and her Frenchwoman too; she's a whimsical, ill-natur'd bitch, and when I have got my bones broke in her service, 'tis ten to one but my recompence is a clap; I hear them tittering without still. I-cod, I'll e'en go lug them both in by the ears, and discover the plot, to secure my pardon.

Exit Rascal.

Const. Pr'ythee, explain, Heartfree.

Heartf. A fair deliverance; thank my stars and my friend.

Bel.

Bel. 'Tis well it went no farther ; a base fellow !

L. B. What can be the meaning of all this ?

Bel. What's his meaning ; I don't know ; but mine is, that if I had married him—I had had no husband.

Heartf. And what's her meaning, I don't know ; but mine is, that if I had married her—I had had wife enough.

Sir F. Your people of wit have got such cramp ways of expressing themselves, they seldom comprehend one another. Pox take you both, will you speak that you may be understood ?

Enter Rasor in Sackcloth, pulling in Lady Fancyful and Mademoiselle.

Rasor. If they won't, here comes an interpreter.

L. B. Heavens ! What have we here ?

Rasor. A villain—but a repenting villain.

All. Rasor !

L. B. What means this ?

Rasor. Nothing without my pardon.

L. B. What pardon do you want ?

Rasor. Imprimis. Your ladyship's ; for a damnable lie made upon your spotless virtue, and set to the tune of Spring Garden. *(To Sir John.)* Next at my generous master's feet I bend ; for interrupting his more noble thoughts with phantoms of disgraceful cuckoldom. *(To Const.)* Thirdly ; I, to this gentleman apply, for making him the hero of my romance. *(To Heartf.)* Fourthly, your pardon, noble Sir ; I ask, for clandestinely marrying you, without either bidding of banns, bishop's licence, friends consent—or your own knowledge. *(To Bel.)* And, lastly, to my good young lady's clemency I come, for pretending the corn was sow'd in the ground ; before ever the plough had been in the field.

Sir F. (Aside.) So that after all, 'tis a moot point, whether I am a cuckold or not.

Bel. Well, Sir, upon condition you confess all, I'll pardon you myself, and try to obtain as much from the rest of the company. But I must know then who 'tis has put you upon all this mischief.

Ras. Satan ; and his equipage ; woman tempted me, vice weakened me,—and so the devil overcame me.

Bel. Then pray will you make us acquainted with your tempter ?

Ras. (To Madem.) Unmask for the honour of France.

All. Mademoiselle !

Madem. Me ask ten thousand pardon of all de good company.

Sir

Sir F. Why this mystery thickens instead of clearing up. (To Rasor.) You son of a whore you, put us out of our pain.

Ras. One moment brings sunshine. (*Shewing Madem.*) 'Tis true, this is the woman that tempted me, but this is the serpent that tempted the woman; and if my prayers might be heard, her punishment for so doing thou'd be like the serpent's of old—(*Pulls off lady Fancyful's mask.*) She should lie upon her face all the days of her life.

All. Lady Fancyful!

Bel. Impertinent!

L. B. Ridiculous!

All. Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

Bel. I hope your ladyship will give me leave to wish you joy, since you have own'd your marriage yourself.—(*To Heartf.*) I vow 'twas strangely wicked in you to think of another wife, when you had one already so charming as her ladyship.

All. Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

L. F. (*Aside.*) Confusion seize 'em, as it seizes me!

Madem. Que le diable étouffe ce maraut de Rasor!

Bel. Your ladyship seems disorder'd: a breeding qualm, perhaps, Mr. Heartfree: your bottle of Hungary water to your lady. Why, madam, he stands as unconcern'd, as if he were your husband in earnest.

L. F. Your mirth's as nauseous as yourself. Belinda, you think you triumph over a rival now; *Helas! ma pauvre fille.* Where'er I'm rival, there's no cause for mirth. No, my poor wretch, 'tis from another principle I have acted. I knew that thing there wou'd make so perverse a husband, and you so impertinent a wife, that, lest your mutual plagues should make you both run mad, I charitably would have broke the match. He! he! he! he! he!

[*Exit, laughing affectedly, Mademoiselle following her.*]

Madem. He! he! he! he! he!

All. Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

Sir F. (*Aside.*) Why now, this woman will be married to somebody too.

Bel. Poor creature! What a passion she's in! But I forgive her.

Heartf. Since you have so much goodness for her, I hope you'll pardon my offence too, madam.

Bel. There will be no great difficulty in that, since I am guilty of an equal fault.

Heartf. So, madam; now had the parson but done his business—

Bel. You'd be half weary of your bargain.

Heartsf. No, sure, I might dispense with one night's lodging.

Bel. I'm ready to try, Sir.

Heartsf. Then let's to church:

And if it be our chance to disagree——

Bel. Take heed—the furlly husband's fate you see.

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

F I N I S.



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